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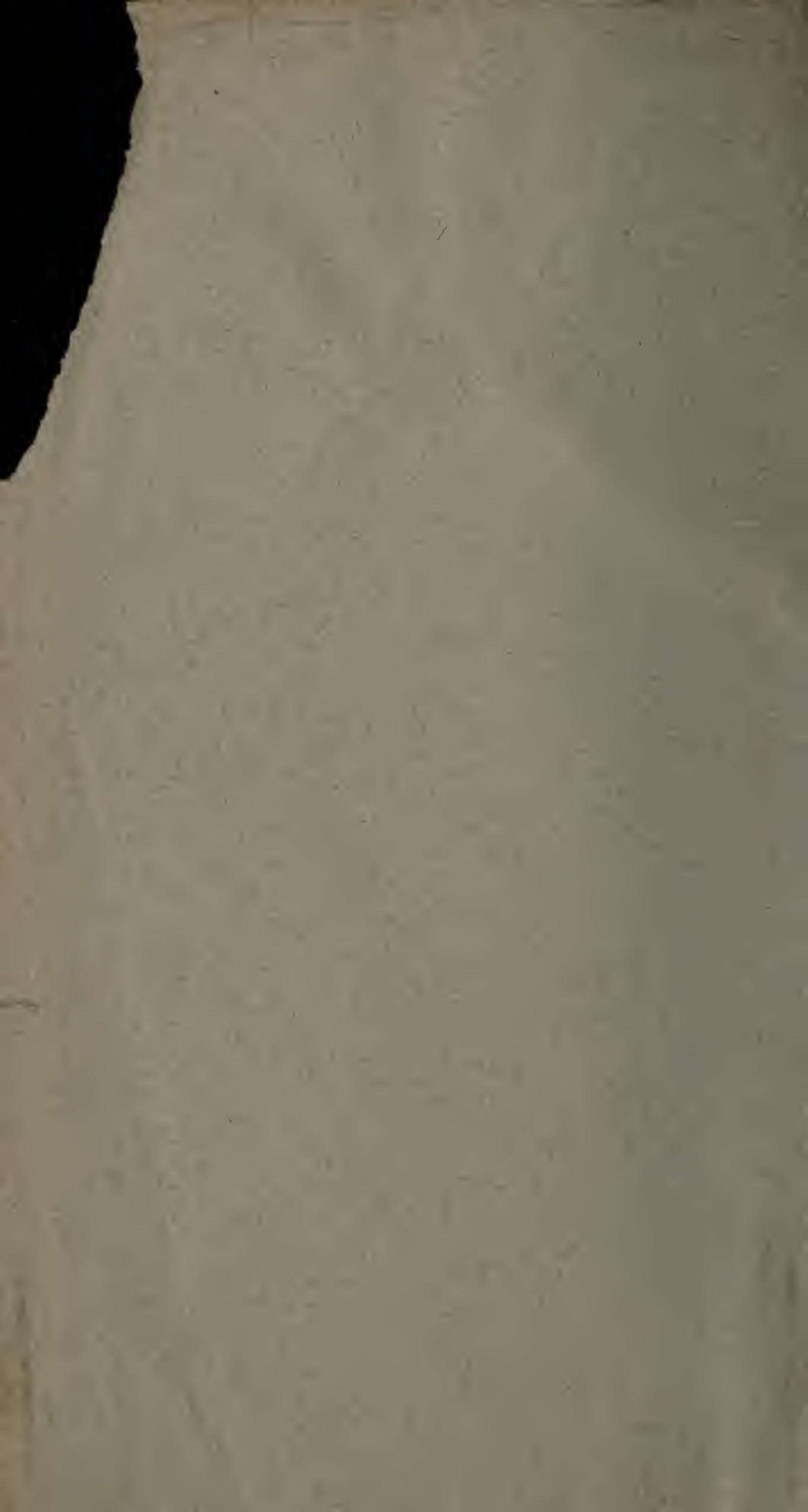
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**ROUND THE WORLD  
IN A MOTOR-CAR**









ANTONIO SCARFOGLIO.

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# ROUND THE WORLD IN A MOTOR-CAR

BY  
ANTONIO SCARFOGLIO

TRANSLATED BY  
J. PARKER HEYES

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". . . to the west, to the west,  
Seeking the way to the Indies. . . ."  
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

WITH SEVENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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## DEDICATION.

To Italians all over the world, in America, Asia,  
and Europe; to all those children of a modest little  
country who have traversed the earth with a spade and pick,  
casting their seed in new furrows and constructing for them-  
selves on the shores of every sea, at the foot of every mountain,  
in the lap of every valley, a larger and stronger homeland; to all those  
of my race who have journeyed at a venture towards the west in search  
of happiness, and who, remote and forgotten in exile, have not  
forgotten their name, their language, and their native land; -  
to all those dwellers in the globe-encircling chain of  
oases of Italianity, to all, great and small, rich and  
poor, who, by their voice, their affection, and  
their enthusiasm have sustained our  
flight, this diary of a pilgrimage  
across the world is dedicated  
by its author  
ANTONIO SCARFOGLIO



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I

AMERICA



# I

## THE DEPARTURE

A HURRIED good-bye through the carriage window ; the train is off ; and we are definitely launched on our prodigious adventure. There are three of us in the compartment, Haaga, Sirtori, and myself, as yet unknown to each other. Until this moment we have not had time to think. We have lived in a state of exhilaration and frenzied excitement which seemed to paralyse our mental faculties. For the last fortnight, occupied with all the minute but indispensable details of the preparations, we have lived in a sort of trance from which we awake suddenly in the railway carriage, and think . . . Shall we ever return ? Whither are we going ? The mind forms a picture of a wide, easy road, a happy journey across America, then—farewell to everything ; silence for months and months ; miles and miles across a desert of ice. In face of the hard fact of this tremendous journey the happy self-complacency which enabled us to meet all objections, all suggestions of difficulties with a shrug of the shoulders, comes to a sudden end. We are now convinced that nothing will arrive in time, that the petrol will be left half-way ; that the provisions will be mislaid ; that, in fact, all the labour spent on every minute detail of the preparations has been wasted and is destined to be of no avail. . . .

When we were nearing Modane and the train slowed up Sirtori ventured to remark—

“Do you think we shall pull through? . . . and get back?”

“Well, who knows?” I replied.

And we continued our journey in silent thought; strangers in reality; yet so near to each other, that our brains seemed to work in harmony.

January 28.—The starting signal will be given at noon from the offices of the *Matin*. All our nervous anxiety has disappeared, all the difficulties have vanished. At least the difficulties are still serious, but our minds have cast aside all doubt. We shall not think of to-morrow, of the future; we shall simply go ahead. The exhilaration, the intoxicating joy of the preparations has returned. We find that of all this fantastic expedition that is before us, with no sleeping-cars, no hotels, when we shall be face to face with nature, surely the most exciting part was the feverish rush from shop to shop, from store to store, in search of guns, furs, tinned foods. . . .

When the hour has struck and our departure is imminent all this tumult of sensations is calmed. We are in front of an immense building, in the midst of a noisy crowd. People fill the streets, fill the balconies, climb the trees of the boulevard. They are everywhere. Waiting has made them impatient. The Latin cars—three French and our Italian—are lined up by the pavement, indifferent to all the noise. We are too small, too mean-looking, to be the cause of all this excitement, the realisation of the dream of this immense throng. The crowd questions us, calls us by



name, and soon the general anxiety spreads also to ourselves. We feel the emotion of spectators, not of actors. Is it possible that we form the centre of this wave of roars which breaks over our machines, of this excitement which strikes us like the wind in great gusts? There is a sudden movement. . . . A window, hitherto unoccupied, on the first floor of the *Matin* office, is thrown wide open and some men appear. A hand waves a signal—

“*Allez!*”

Saint-Chaffray grasps his steering-wheel. Slowly, slowly, he moves. Our wheels also give a turn. What is happening? We hear a great roar like the sea dashing on the shore; there is a whirl of outstretched hands, a rush of sound. . . .

“Good-bye! Good-bye! Good luck!”

The roar breaks up into a hundred, a thousand different shouts, then combines into various roars of salutation, augury, hope. . . .

“Good-bye! Good-bye!”

Handkerchiefs, newspapers, flowers, smiles—everything that can serve as a simple offering is lavished in a frenzy of enthusiasm that knows no bounds. Women, carried away by the excitement, kiss the hands that hold the steering-wheels; men swarm on the cars perilously. . . .

“Bravo! Bravo! Come back soon!”

This is madness, tumultuous madness. Flags are torn down from poles, hats snatched off, arms gesticulate. . . .

“Brave lads! Good-bye!”

More houses with packed windows; more thronged streets, omnibuses bristling with waving sticks, um-

brellas, and handkerchiefs. The cheers dwindle in volume; then comes an iron barrier, trees, the main road, silence. . . .

So began our adventure!

January 29.—We slept at Mantes in an ancient wooden inn whose floors resounded to our heavy tread—one of those inns of old France, open to the highway, whose turrets have seen pass the furious cavalcades and the restful litters, the heroes and the ladies of ten centuries. Hidden in a courtyard with crumbling arches, our car seemed a paltry affair, unworthy of the memories which lived in the echoes of every corner; and we, too, were embarrassed, lost, miserable, unable to speak or move in that panelled room before a monumental open hearth with its antique andirons. The great smoked beams seemed to press on our heads, the room groaned as though in protest against our intrusion. So it was rather a shock when our host, a good bourgeois, with gold chain, and rings, and red hair, asked us to sign some post cards. Evidently he thought we were heroes. But that did not prevent him from presenting a terrible bill as we left.

January 30.—We arrive at Havre in a deluge of rain, a deluge which had persecuted our hands and faces all the way. At Rouen we wanted to stop to give a truce to ourselves and the machine; but the desire to arrive urged us onward. It was truly a magnificent road, cut through enormous forests, winding amidst colossal trees, their tops still heavy and white with the last traces of snow, or traversing villages rendered mute and lifeless by the pouring rain.

At Havre the rain glistens on the trees of the boulevards and patters on the roofs. Drowned beneath a

thick veil of water, the great streets seem to have increased in size and the houses appear to be weeping. The throb of our engine is thrown back to us from the walls of the city. The port, too, is mournful. The livid sea swells into enormous lumps, which roll without noise to the shore and break silently like waves of thick oil. In the general obscurity the lines of the ships are lost. Desolation is over the quays, where the great cranes raise on high their long arms, and trucks stretch in two interminable lines under the eternal rain.

February 1.—We left this morning on a grey sea, under a grey sky, in a grey dawn. What sadness, what mortal sadness, for us men of the South, who are accustomed to find the sun always shining above us when we awake! It rains to-day as yesterday, as the day before, as always! The cars were put on board yesterday, nailed up in great wooden cases. The arms of the crane raised them like so many bundles of straw, suspended them for a moment over the sea, then deposited them in the bottom of the ship's hold. And we remained alone, a little embarrassed, somewhat grotesque-looking, perhaps, in our furs and caps and gauntlets in which we felt ridiculous after their necessary complement—the automobile—had disappeared down the gullet of the steamer. At Paris not one of us had ever thought that we should be separated from the car, that it would be stupid to travel thus, dressed like Eskimos, in the first-class saloon of an elegant liner. All of us, on leaving Paris, had an instinctive sense of getting away from ordinary life, a feeling of exile from the polite world.

February 5.—This evening we shall see the light of

Long Island. When the steward announced the fact, an immense sigh of relief passed along the line of divans on which nearly all the passengers of the *Lorraine* have lived for five days and five nights. For the lighthouse means land; and land means the end of martyrdom. Oh, these last interminable twenty-four hours of the voyage! On board a steamer there are three kinds of distractions—the ladies, the cooking, and the sea. But here the ladies are ill, the cooking is monotonous, and the sea is invisible, owing to the rain.

No one who has not made a long journey by sea can really know what ennui is, that dreadful agony of not knowing what to do, where to move, or why one should move, that unspeakable torture of the nerves which banishes sleep from the eyelids and promotes profound yawning, that terrible state of mind which fills the seat of every chair with pins. Certainly there is nothing like the sea for giving an idea of solitude. In a field, however deserted it may be, the mind always discovers something, a point or an angle on which to rest itself, a stone, a bush, an insect—something which breaks the monotony and gives repose. In the sea there is nothing but an expanse of green, a stretch of blue, a bubble of foam that breaks—and yourself. For a thinker this may be the ideal environment, but not for us, who have come here to live a life of movement and agitation, who have fled from the daily life of idleness and launched ourselves on a great enterprise. We, who are dying of ennui, of yawning, would gladly welcome a storm, a wreck, any incident that would give us some excitement, something to talk about; for, naturally, nobody talks about the voyage itself.

February 6.—At daybreak land appeared. We went

to bed last night dissatisfied. We had not seen the famous Long Island lighthouse and were appalled by the idea of passing another interminable day on this floating island. Around us the sea is white and frozen and a cold wind makes the snowflakes dance in the air. The coast is on our left, also white, except where the "cottages" form brown splashes among the bare trees. The passengers all devour the land with their eyes as though they had just come from a desert island and for years and years had not seen smoke rising from the chimney of a human habitation. Those three thousand miles of sea, the six days of the voyage, weigh on the senses like an eternity. It is always so, at sea. The land one leaves, the land which slowly fades below the horizon remains fresh and vivid in the mind until the new land appears; then it becomes confused, indistinct, evanescent, and its image finally disappears.

The steamer advances slowly.

We watch for the first glimpse of New York. Suddenly in the frozen air there appears a confused mass, an enormous grey patch, which subdivides and breaks into a line of darker patches dominated by an undulating cloud of smoke. That is all we see of New York, the only complete impression, for the others which follow as the vessel draws nearer are partial, details and fragments of impressions. It is impossible to get a *coup d'œil* of New York.

Slowly the group of monstrous sky-scrapers is passed; Brooklyn Bridge has raised its slender yet colossal skeleton, the grotesque statue of Liberty has brandished its torch before our prow. Amidst the dense swarm of ferry-boats, launches, craft of all sorts, that cut their way through the ice of the bay, the *Lorraine* glides

like a coursing greyhound, and slowly comes alongside the quay. Many people, it seems, are awaiting us. Already a band of journalists has invaded the ship and photographers prepare their cameras. On land we are packed into certain beflagged motor-cars and carried away. The cold cuts our ears and all the streets are white with snow. Good omen!

February 10.—Even before we start our poor *Züst* is taken ill. She has broken a tube of the injector, as *Haaga* tells us, and they have had to dismount the engine in our little garage. The news of this misfortune spreads and our good friends of the other machines fraternally predict that the malady is mortal. Not so the Italians of New York. The fact that an Italian machine is fighting for the prize and supremacy with the champions of America fills them with pride and glory. The Italian psychology is a curious thing. Sceptics, pessimists, unpatriotic while under the shade of their own houses, distance makes the Italians lovers, desperate lovers of the far-off sun, the pure sky, the limpid air of their native home. A fierce homesickness fills their eyes with tears; and at the fluttering of an Italian flag, the sound of an Italian voice, they become sentimental, tender, and indulgent towards the distant land. And the Italians of America more so than any others. The enthusiasm of the Italians here is, therefore, not for us personally, it is not our good or bad fortune which moves and interests them. No, it is the name of Italy arrayed in battle against the others; the flag which flutters with the rest from the windows of the Knickerbocker Hotel. It is the homage paid daily by every newspaper to their country and their race which makes them mad with joy, tenderness, and enthusiasm.

They love and celebrate not the men but the race ; not us but the symbol that we are—Italy.

And that is the reason why, trembling with anxiety, as though round the bed of a beloved invalid, these Italians watch, outside the garage where Haaga and Sirtori are working. Every workman that leaves the place is taken by assault, anxiously questioned, implored to tell the truth and hide nothing.

“Can it be mended? Will it be ready?”

They cannot be reassured, but must remain in the biting wind with their feet in the snow and their faces pressed against the windows of the garage—watching and waiting. Some of them do not go to their work for two days; they will be fined, perhaps dismissed, when they return. Some withdraw, but there are always others to take their places, and the crowd at the window-panes is gradually renewed, and new voices ask in painfully anxious tones—

“Our poor machine! Can it be cured?”

February 12.—It is cured. The tube has been changed, everything replaced in position, and the baggage is being tied on. The Italians, having learnt this news, reassembled and formed a tumultuous throng around the garage. They are frenzied, mad with joy, carried away by this resurrection. As we move quickly about they throw us kisses from the tips of their fingers. All the desires, hopes, ambitions of these poor exiles are centred on “our dear machine.”

At last! Somebody arrives to tell us that the hour is come. The guns, furs, and other accessories are loaded on the car. We listen to the final words of advice, the last instructions. The crowd at the door of the garage is enormous. Haaga goes out, seizes the

starting-handle and gives it a turn. . . . Hardly daring to breathe, the crowd listens. Not a sound from the motor. The silence is insupportable. Another turn of the handle. The engine remains mute. One more effort. With a roar, echoing in that profound stillness like the rumble of an earthquake, the Züst awakes from its sleep, palpitates and breathes. The crowd, silent for one second more, breaks into a frenzied, delirious "Hurrah!"

Slowly the car leaves the garage and takes its way towards the *Times* Square, whence it is to start on its long journey. The serried crowd opens before it like the sea cut by the bows of a liner, then closes behind us and advances, almost pushing us forward.

"Italy! Italy! Hurrah!"

We are lost, as it were, in the surge of this human wave on which we seem to float. Sirtori, at the steering-wheel, is hardly sure of himself. Haaga, myself, and our guide are in a whirl of confusion. Our machine scarcely seems to advance by its own power, but is urged forward on the crest of all this enthusiasm, raised from the ground and carried like a sacred offering. In their hands, caps, and the buttonholes of their coats, the crowd carry little Italian flags. They wave them on high, kiss them. The flags flutter like butterflies on a spring morning. Still the crowd cheers—

"Italy! Italy! Hurrah!"

Suddenly the throng seems to overflow into a square and recedes from us. Mounted policemen clear the way with the flat of their sabres.??The crowd lengthens out and takes the form of an enormous serpent, writhing on the pavement. We are alone. It is a curious



sensation. One feels as though one were suddenly relieved from an oppressive weight. The crowd was so dense that we were almost suffocated. Now we are able to breathe.

Kept within bounds by policemen and a double file of automobiles, the human tide flows along the footways, and we are alone in the middle. At least, not exactly alone, for beside us are the other competing machines—the Thomas, lithe and low; the Protos, short and well knit on its squat wheels; the De Dion Bouton, pyramidal; the Motobloc and the Sizaire, fragile and small. Each nation seems to have put a reflex of its soul into these machines, which are the flowers of their respective geniuses, created in their own likeness—the Protos, heavy and strong to labour; the Thomas, long and impetuous, straining like a greyhound at the leash; the Züst, Motobloc, and Sizaire, slender and nervous. We look at the machines around us with eager eyes. They are to contend with us for victory. We would like to read their destiny, to know what is in store for them . . . and for us.

A shrill trumpet blast breaks the silence and the motors begin to throb. First to go is the De Dion, then the Thomas, next our Züst, then the others. The De Dion advances slowly, turns round the building of the *New York Times*, passes before the line of motor-cars, and takes the advance guard. The band plays the “Marseillaise.” Then the Thomas moves, then the Züst. Quite slowly, almost at a walking pace, we make the circuit of the *Times* building and stop. The notes of the National Hymn are followed by a tremendous silence.

A man dressed in a black overcoat approaches us and asks—

“ All right ? ”

His voice sounds as clear and distinct in the enormous square as if he were talking in a small closed room. With one voice we reply—

“ All right ! ”

The man then mounts a small wooden platform, draws a revolver, points it in the air, and fires.

I hardly hear the report. I only know that we are hurled forward, surrounded by a crowd, kissed again and again, then advance between two thick hedges of extended hands amidst a roar as of a falling torrent. I remember nothing more ; I know nothing ; my mind is a chaos of confused impressions.

## II

### THE SNOW

AT Tarrytown, a little calm, quiet village betwixt the river and the forest, we stop, after a break-neck race across the streets of New York. Something has gone wrong with the chain non-skid ; but the halt is not unwelcome, as it enables us to collect our thoughts. New York and its noise are already far off and our long journey has really begun. It is strange how far off and evanescent everything that happened this morning seems ; it is already scarcely more than a confused recollection. We are the first to arrive here ; all the others, including the terrible Thomas, must have remained behind at the starting-place. But it behoves us to be quick or they will overtake us. Thus the subtle torment begins—that torment which for months and months is to become the first element of our lives, which will sleep with us and wake with us. It is this fear of those who are following or preceding us—this subtle anguish which will banish sleep and even hunger, and enable us to endure cold and fatigue for hour after hour and mile after mile. Where are the others ? Have they arrived ?

At any rate, when our repairs were completed they had not overtaken us. A group of people assembled round our car and saluted us coldly. They were Americans and had hoped to see their own champion pass first.

The road is excellent. There is a little snow, hardened by the wind. We pass through several tiny, tranquil villages and a sort of Norwegian landscape, with pointed pines and steep hills. We do not stop for lunch. We brought with us some sandwiches, which are sufficient; and thus we shall continue until to-morrow, if necessary, in order to reach Albany. Haaga murmurs in a low voice some sad German songs. He was glad at first when the farewells were over and the adventure had really begun. Now he has become melancholy and is thinking of his father in Germany, to whom he did not bid good-bye before starting.

The car is running well, without any shock or vibration, as though it were sliding along a road of glass. We shall arrive this evening at Albany if . . . if . . . But the engine comes to a sudden stop. Haaga interrupts his songs and dismounts, looking somewhat anxious. One of the cells in the radiator has sprung a leak and the water has all disappeared. A repair is effected, but for water we have to break up some ice and put it in the radiator until it is melted by the heat. Meanwhile the Thomas and the De Dion have overtaken us and are now far ahead. It was a terrible catastrophe for us. The certainty of being in advance of everybody had, so to speak, intoxicated us; we were already thus early thinking of victory and . . . and now? It seems ridiculous to confess it, but in this race we are living only with and for the desire or the hope of the day. To be first, to be ahead of the others to-day—that is enough. To-morrow is such a long way off.

Sirtori, at the steering-wheel, is furious, and takes us

flying through dense pine forests and little villages, up and down hills at break-neck speed. Suddenly a crowd appears in front of us, and we see two stationary cars. The place must be Poughkeepsie, and those two cars the Thomas and the De Dion. They are behind us again, and we traverse a road untouched by the enemy's wheels. . . . A teamster, extending his arms in the middle of the road, stops us.

“Where are you going?”

“To Albany.”

“This is not the road. Turn back and at the first crossing go to the right. Good luck, boys!”

We turn and begin the race again. It is now four o'clock, and no one has thought of eating, nor do we yet think of it. As we approach Albany the snow becomes deeper and softer, and necessarily the machine has to slow down. It is not that we are afraid of cutting through the snow, but the wheels slip and can get no hold on the yielding surface.

At five o'clock, quite unexpectedly, there appears before us a car which is panting and straining itself against the soft enemy. It is the De Dion, which had got ahead of us while we were on the wrong road. We also have hard work in overcoming the snow, but the De Dion suffers more than we do. We leave it behind, but another tyre-chain breaks, and the French car overtakes us again. The Thomas also must be ahead of us. It seems that for to-day, at any rate, we are fated to keep the third place. It is a bad augury for the whole of the race.

The snow becomes deeper, and night falls. There is no hope of overtaking the two cars that precede us. In the dark and the snow driving becomes most

fatiguing. The wheels sink in deeply and spin round without making any progress. At every hundred yards the car stops, losing all its power against the inert obstacle, then resumes its progress, bounding and leaping forward. Sometimes it is necessary to make a short retreat and rush forward, as it were, with head lowered, at the barrier. Fortunately we are able to follow the tracks left by the wheels of those who are ahead of us. Soon the road is lost altogether under the snow and we make zigzags across the fields. We pass no more villages and see no more telegraph poles. A terrible doubt begins to rise in our minds that we are again not so much on the wrong road as in the midst of a desert of snow, without houses, without bread, and without fire. We no longer see any tracks in the snow. Are our adventures beginning so early?

Haaga dismounts. With the aid of an acetylene lamp he manages to discover the tracks, some one hundred yards behind us. But the telegraph poles, those mute companions of every solitary traveller, those friends of every pilgrim, have all disappeared. And the other cars, the American and the French, have they lost the way? However, we continue, and must hurry in order to overtake them at any cost. We shall at least have companions in this desolate land for the first night of our journey. The snow becomes deeper and softer, the wheels sink in up to the axles, and all progress becomes tiresomely slow. Again and again we have to dismount and walk, assisting the car now and again by pushing with our shoulders. Thus we get forward.

A black house appears. But further along on the glistening snow there is the reflection of a brilliant



HALT IN THE SNOW.



NEAR JEFFERSON: LOSS OF A WHEEL.

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light. We hurry along and voices call us by name. It is the Thomas and the De Dion, blocked in the snow. It seems that it is impossible to go further, and we shall remain here all night. However, we are, at least, all in the same boat.

The men on the Thomas and the De Dion worked for half an hour with spades and poles to open a way and free the wheels. We also lend assistance in digging away the snow. The Thomas is liberated first and, by the united strength of the whole party, is dragged out of the drift and disappears in the darkness. The De Dion, on the other hand, being heavier, sinks deeper at every instant. We also help it a little, and then—tired, exhausted, frozen, and annoyed by the advantage which the Thomas has now gained over us—we decide to leave. So we pass the stranded De Dion, trying with all the power at our command to break down the barrier of snow.

Heaving and tossing like a ship on a tempestuous sea, we succeed in getting away, and find a road which is relatively easy between two lines of trees and towards the houses. We are fatigued, our eyelids are heavy and our arms weak. We stop at the houses before a little garage open to the wind. The American machine is also there.

In the warm room and before some smoking soup I experience the joy of eating. The boiled potatoes have a savour of ambrosia, and the beer a sweetness never before experienced.

February 13.—We were all aroused at dawn. It was still snowing; a fine, white, blinding dust was falling. After a hurried breakfast and one glance at the car, our labours begin again. Last evening we had

deluded ourselves on the little stretch of good road that precedes Hudson that things would be better to-day, but actually they are worse. The snow is over a foot deep, and we are compelled to proceed very slowly, marching in Indian file. The Thomas goes first, we follow, and last comes the De Dion, which, on account of its weight, suffers more than the rest. Schuster, the mechanic of the Thomas, precedes the file on foot with a long alpenstock, which now and again he plunges into the snow to try the depth. When it appears to be too deep he comes back and explores, looking for a better place to cross the fields. He breaks a wire fence, and the cars advance across cultivated fields, bumping across invisible ditches, oscillating, staggering, stopping, then going on again, always following the zigzag tracks of Schuster. We care no more about the roads, the whole plain is ours, and our wheels take possession of the land around. Terrified countrymen watch us pass through the midst of their cabbages, breaking through the boundaries of their fields. They try to protest, but we pay no attention. We quickly become accustomed to this absolute contempt for property, this violent exercise of our will. From this to robbery is only a short step! We should easily find some convincing reasons for maintaining our "rights."

But sometimes it is not enough to take our course across the fields, because there also the snow, scarce in one part, accumulates in great quantities in another. Sometimes, while appearing solid, it gives way under the weight of the machine, which sticks fast. Then we dismount and dig the car out with spades. Working for three or four hours, we excavate a long lane in the

snowdrift, a little wider than the car, its length depending on the length of the drift. At the bottom we lay down planks, which have been torn down from fences or removed from the railway-tracks or wherever we could lay hands on them. Then, when the snow corridor is finished, the machines get under way. This is repeated time after time, and it requires hours and hours to cover a distance of one hundred yards. Naturally it is the leading machine which has the hardest time. So we and the Thomas take it in turns to go in the van; the De Dion could not stand the shock.

It was thus that we travelled to-day for ten hours until we reached Albany. We literally fought our way inch by inch, and foot by foot, over the twenty-two miles between Albany and Hudson. If the landscape which surrounded us had not been so uniformly sad under its white blanket which reduced everything to the same level, I believe that we should be able to remember every stone of this cruel road. We not only *travelled* the road to Albany, we actually *lived* it.

We were received in triumph at Albany. There were bands, flowers, and banquets, and naturally speeches; for the Americans dine only as an excuse for speech-making. Albany is one of those pompous little cities furnished with a Capitol and a Pantheon, which the Americans are so fond of dumping down in the midst of a waste to remind the land and all travellers of their domination. As regards the condition of the roads, we get discouraging news. We are told that they are worse—is it possible for a road to be worse?—than those we have met so far. Two feet of snow at Schenectady; three feet further on, and after that—

inferno! How and when shall we arrive at Buffalo? Nobody knows, and not one of us dares to think. Our perspective does not extend for the present beyond Schenectady. To-morrow we shall think about Buffalo, but to-day's stage is quite enough to occupy our minds.

And a terrible stage it is! We cannot proceed more than one hundred yards at a stretch without coming to a serious, almost insuperable, obstacle. The snow is so deep that we sink in up to our thighs, and spades become useless in front of such an accumulation. What human forces can dig through a snowdrift three or four feet high a corridor twenty miles long and six feet wide? It is impossible! It is impossible to go any further. Our arms have no power over the spades, and our feet cannot resist the cold which seizes and turns them to ice. The skin of our hands and faces is completely cracked.

But in spite of all this we constructed two bridges, dug a trench a mile long, and arrived at Schenectady, very late; the sun was beginning to sink behind the mountains. It was impossible for us to go beyond the little town built of green wood—Schenectady is green, the colour of the sea. We had no more strength for fighting against the snow. There is a tow-path along the Erie Canal which leads to Syracuse. It is narrow and almost level with the water on one side and a precipice on the other. But anything is better than battling against this soft yet obstinate enemy.

So we resumed our journey on the tow-path. Oh, the joy of speed along a road free from snow! Only the Thomas followed us; the De Dion was a long way behind. Houses and lights are passed unnoticed. But soon we are overcome by an infinite desire for a warm room and ready table and a bed.

We reached Fonda. It is a little village all painted and varnished, with a good inn containing a brilliantly lighted ballroom. We were tired, and the De Dion was far away. Yet, before going to sleep, we entered the ballroom and danced!

February 14.—We found an old newspaper, forgotten on a bench in the hall of the inn. It says: “The automobiles, it is calculated, will traverse the five thousand miles of America in fifteen days. . . .” And to think that we, also, believed this folly before the start!

We leave in company with the Thomas. The De Dion has not overtaken us yet, but is checked in some far-away village, by an accident, perhaps, or by the mortal fatigue of its crew. We proceed with relative speed along the tow-path of the Erie Canal. The snow has disappeared, but rain has taken its place. It is a dense, heavy, blinding rain. The desolation of the surrounding country becomes still more complete behind this thick curtain of water which renders the outline of everything undecided and confused. In the mixture of snow and rain, such houses as we pass look more squalid and mournful than ever. We, too, are wearied and sad, in spite of the hope of an improving road. Haaga tries to sing, in order to cheer us up, but at the third verse the song dries up on his lips. It is impossible to feel joyous; there is too much rain.

Rain has a disastrous effect upon the nerves. It discourages and exasperates. It acts directly on the centres of the will and weakens one. There is no heroism that can resist it. But this morning we continue to receive this pouring torrent upon our backs; in resignation, not from conviction, because so far we

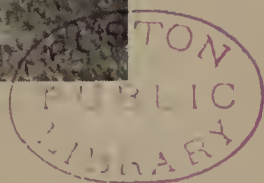
have not found a house or a roof of any sort under which we could take a rest. Otherwise, who knows if we should have been able to resist temptation? Fortunately, when we reach Utica the rain stops. We are offered flowers, banquets, and addresses. The fact of our arriving first sends the Italians in Utica almost delirious.

But after Utica our woes begin again. Beyond that peaceful, delicious town, shining with water and paint, the canal path becomes impossible, and we have to take to the road which we had abandoned at Schenectady. Shall we find the snow again, that beautiful, deep, frozen snow? Shall we take up our spades and poles and begin to make bridges and trenches? No. We have plenty of troubles, but they are troubles of a new sort. The snow was not successful in breaking our wheels and freezing us for ever in some little American village, but it is now a question whether we shall not be drowned in slush. The rain has melted the snow and the road is invaded by hundreds of little swollen torrents.

In America the "high road" is hardly known because the need for it does not exist. It is a country without a history and without a past. Without effort and still quite new, it has come into contact with nations which for ages and ages have travelled laboriously behind the sun. It has taken to itself whatever seemed best and most modern, caring little or nothing for the antique or the less good. It has come of age *per saltum*, whereas the elder countries have travelled by stages along the road of thousands of years. The railway was already in existence when America became an organised nation, so there was no use for the high road.



SIRTORI AND HAAGA IN THE DESERT.







The only means of communication which it has ever understood are the locomotive and the railway. Other systems were too ancient. The Americans have constructed railways for all their needs, and have allowed the old paths, trodden out by the herds of the first shepherds, to become covered with moss and furze. No one uses them, no one knows them, except three or four farmers whom necessity urges from one cottage to another. Finally the paths disappear. Overgrown by grass, washed out by rain, softened by snow, they eventually become an inextricable mass of briars and brambles, like a primitive jungle. It is through this jungle that we travel. The snow, only half melted by the rain which has fallen, has been turned into a tenacious slush in which the car sinks and the wheels revolve uselessly. Non-skid devices and the chains wrapped round our tyres are no good. The wheels churn up the water and race round on the slippery ground without taking any hold. And as we advance laboriously, the road becomes worse.

The Züst strains every nerve, but makes very slow progress. It retreats for a few paces to get an impetus and is then hurled forward. The viscid, tenacious mass gives way and opens in front of us, but it closes again and the machine remains powerless against this obstinate resistance. We begin our spade-work again under the heavy rain and cut out a road, excavating until the ground becomes relatively solid. We lay down a bed of planks and stones and along these the machine advances under the deluge. A hundred yards further on the Züst stops and the work is repeated.

At Rome, a queer, black-looking village, we were received with the American March. They believed

that ours was the Thomas car and we were applauded with frenzy, but as soon as they discovered their mistake the enthusiasm vanished.

At ten o'clock at night we arrived at Canastota, a village so small that one could almost hold it in the fist. The whole population had assembled on an iron bridge which rides the canal. They were Americans for the greater part, and had prepared large flags and a loud band. They were much upset when we appeared on the bridge followed by the De Dion, which had joined us to-day. However, the blow came so suddenly that they were unable to check their applause. Only three Italians were there—three poor wretches, sick with bronchitis in this frozen country. They were simply mad with joy.

February 15.—Compared with preceding ones, to-day's was an easy stage over possible and practicable roads, through country less monotonous and less sad-looking. They were ugly certainly; the American landscape is always ugly. It is ugly because it is not green. The plants, the grass, the meadows, all have the same harsh, reddish tint, a tawny colour which is an offence to the eyes. The sole joy of this landscape is provided by the villages with their tiny, low cottages, which the Americans paint in the most tender colours, a pale blue or green, as though to evoke that which is wanting in their sky and their fields. The architecture is puerile and ingenuous—the same everywhere. The little gardens are neatly kept, and all are enclosed with the same wire fence, planted with the same flowers. But when the village becomes a town, when the houses increase in size, their cleanliness diminishes; when the streets lengthen and fill with smoke and tramcars and

“hustlers,” as in this Syracuse which we traverse hurriedly, then all the joy and fascination cease, and we are back in a sort of New York, but with a population less rich, trains less hurried, and women less beautiful. The American town is stamped with the brand of ugliness. It cannot be otherwise than ugly. But while New York loyally bears the weight of its ugliness and does not attempt to hide it, these smaller provincial towns, on the other hand, give themselves swollen and pompous airs. They are rich in names which have been plundered from the geography and history of the world: stifled with stucco and gilding and colonnades; their “capitols,” “pantheons,” and “coliseums” are grotesque imitations of the great things of the past, ludicrous miscarriages of magnificence. . . .

A good journey, in spite of rain, and marred by no incident. At least, just outside of Geneva we, the De Dion, and the Thomas were held up for two or three hours in a morass. We were dragged out by horses which Haaga went to find. We were unwilling to stop at Geneva, but Rochester was still far off and the snow came on again. There was a banquet ready, and we remained.

February 16.—The snow again! We thought we had left it behind and should not see it again until we came to the frozen roads of Alaska. But, during the night, it accumulated on the road in great solid drifts, and it is still falling this morning. Geneva is all white with it. The roofs of the houses, the trees and the gardens are all covered with white as if the hand of a magician had substituted marble for wood.

Forward! The Thomas left first, then the De Dion. We came last. It is always so; we are the last to leave

in the morning, but we arrive first at night. These performances are of no advantage to us, they serve no purpose, it is true, but they flatter our pride and the puerile enthusiasm of all Italians. And not this alone; they also irritate the Americans. What happened to us has happened also to the public. Nobody thinks about Paris or Alaska, but only of the day's goal. Man has need of a not too distant goal, something to which he can stretch his eyes and his hands without fatigue. Each stage of our journey passes through the mind like a nervous crisis. It lasts a minute, then ceases. It may be renewed every day, but cannot be protracted indefinitely. That is why the whole of America has fixed its eyes on the daily turn of our wheels, and why it bets, and wins, and loses methodically every night.

But to-day fortune is not kind to us. It is a Yankee day. On a level crossing one of our chain wheels broke, and we were compelled to proceed at a limp with only one solid wheel as far as Rochester, where we arrived two and a half hours after the others. Naturally our good friends of the De Dion and the Thomas had gone on. They lost no time in waiting for us, as had been agreed. The Italians when they saw us arrive, wept with rage; they became furious when they learned that we should have to stop here at the garage to effect repairs while the others were hurrying towards Buffalo, and perhaps further. To complete our misfortune, to-day is Sunday, and the workshops are closed.

However, we find one open, that of the Gearless Transmission Company, which made us free of its workshops and its tools, but not of its workmen,

who have their weekly rest. On the other hand, the Italians offered themselves *en masse*. Doctors, lawyers, and workmen all laboured with us, discarding their jackets and rolling up their sleeves. A little banker and a lawyer, Cappellino and Calogero, worked the bellows with all their might; others helped Haaga by fetching coal for the fire; others, again, brought food—roast chicken, bottles of wine, and cigars. And those who did not enter the garage waited outside and froze in the snow. At midnight the repairs were finished. It was a summary, crude repair, but one which would possibly allow us to proceed as far as Chicago, where we should be able to replace the broken part. And at midnight we left in the direction of Buffalo, where the De Dion and the Thomas have stopped.

It is our first night on the car, and certainly it is not a good night. A heavy snow falls, and the furious wind dashes in our faces fine, sharp needles of ice, which lacerate us terribly. Ahead of us, showing us the way, is a big red car belonging to the Gearless Transmission Company. The snow is high upon the road, but it is fresh and soft, and the wheels cut through it without excessive difficulty. As if understanding that a great effort is necessary, and that the joy and pride of thousands of Italians depended upon it, the Züst does wonders this night. It has never gone so far and so fast at one stretch, I believe, since the revolver of MacClellan, in New York, started it upon its adventurous career. In the snow which whirls around us we see the immense white plain, as it were, hurling itself at us. Brown cottages are scarcely perceived before they have disappeared. Before our frozen

eyelids there pass terrible visions of things common and well known, but which in the night assume fantastic, monstrous aspects. The houses of a town lost in the white sea look like a herd of antediluvian monsters proceeding across a desert; a forest seems to be a great fleet at anchor waiting for the wind to fill its sails; the telegraph poles resemble the black figures of men advancing in doleful procession towards an unknown goal with their arms extended as though imploring. And the machine rushes through the vortex of snow, heaving like a ship in a storm. The wind cuts our faces like a sword; the snow wounds us with a thousand needle-pricks. The storm roars in our ears with the noise of a torrent dashing over rocks. . . . A village, a light, an inn. Hurrah! A glass of whisky taken in haste under the stupefied and sleepy-lidded eyes of the barman, and then off again. As the dawn comes over the tree tops things around us resume their normal dimensions. The phantoms pass away with the night, and the country becomes cold, dead, and deserted.

We stop in a bar at Buffalo for breakfast. It is about seven o'clock and it snows no longer.

### III

#### IN CHASE

FEBRUARY 17.—The waiter in the bar watches us eat, or rather devour, his eggs and bacon. The snow-covered car which throbs before his door, the men, almost invisible in snow-sodden furs, certainly have a prodigious effect upon his sleepy nerves. A yawn shapes his mouth into a big capital “O” which remains fixed on his lips in an exclamation of surprise. The tables are still piled one on the other, and the atmosphere is still full of the pungent odour of smoke and alcohol, left from the previous night. Only when we were leaving did he understand who and what we were.

“The Züst; the Züst?” he asks. “You are the Züst, the Italian car?”

Standing just outside his inn, he with one hand waves his apron as though it were a flag, and leans the other against the body of our machine.

“The Züst, yes, the Züst. The Italian car.”

“But were you not stopped at Rochester yesterday with the engine broken?”

“Yesterday, true; but we are here to-day. We have travelled all night.”

“But you will surely stay here. It is a good inn, and a banquet will be ready in a moment.”

“No, no. We must get on.”

He comes down from the clouds. He is indignant. To decline that banquet seems to him a most irreverent thing. Why travel ; why take the trouble to rush all round the world, unless it is to sleep in good inns and eat indigestible banquets ?

“ But,” he continues, “ the Thomas stopped and the De Dion also. They’re here.”

“ But we are going on.”

In his emotion he had let fall his apron and was gesticulating wildly.

“ Well, then, sign these post cards,” he said, persuaded that any further argument would be useless.

And so we hurried away, in spite of the lost night and our fatigue. Haaga takes the place of Sirtori at the wheel, and Sirtori, on the back seat, tries between one jerk and another to snatch a little sleep. It is a strange, disordered, mad life that we are leading, centred in one sole anxiety, that of always getting forward. Eating, drinking, and sleeping have become secondary incidents ; useless, cumbrous luxuries. We eat when we can, sleep as we can—in the car, in bad beds, on the ground, whenever it becomes impossible to continue the journey or wherever an insuperable obstacle beats down our energy and our will. There is always a sandwich or two somewhere on the car and a drop of whisky. That is enough for our happiness. It is true that the sandwich when it is a day old has to be broken with a hammer, and that the whisky when we put our lips to the bottle almost freezes our teeth. But what does that matter ? We are bowling along.

We get along very well to-day. Perhaps Haaga took a little too much whisky in Buffalo, and he is now singing at the wheel, filled with the joy of being first





HAAGA RIDES IN SEARCH OF PETROL.

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this morning. We were last yesterday. Listening to this good German, this big, blond baby whom a three months' stay in Milan has made more Italian than the Italians, has a curious effect upon me. At night he cannot replace our flag in its cover without having tears in his eyes. All he has learnt of Italian are the words "*Viva l'Italia*," so that he can shout them to all the winds of heaven. He is of another race, another country. He knows nothing about us because he does not understand Italian. He does not love our country because it is not his. And yet his heart has opened like a flower during this contest. He has become an Italian not from conviction or affection, but by expansion and contact. He has forgotten nothing of his own race, of his own country, of his own language, and he has learned nothing of ours. But he loves us all without understanding us, and he loves our country and our name without understanding them. . . .

Now he sings in German because he knows nothing else, but at intervals he drags in the "*Viva l'Italia ; Viva l'Italia*." I smile at him, and the workmen tramping through the cold morning mist to their work, the women who open the shutters of their windows, and the tradesmen at the doors of their shops turn wondering faces towards this fantastic engine which hurries three fur-clad monsters along to the sound of German songs.

There is very little snow on the road. The rain must have removed it during the night and the frost has solidified the mud, making it as hard as marble. We feel slight and continuous jolts, which shake us from head to foot. For a little while it is disagreeable,

but then the nerves become accustomed to it. There remains a sense of discomfort in the stomach, but nothing more.

The machine, however, is more sensitive than our nerves, and it cannot endure this continual dance of St. Vitus. The repair which we effected at Rochester was of too summary a character, and the perpetual shaking does not help to make it more solid. At every jolt we fear that the wheel will break again, and we live in a constant state of atrocious agony. We travel quickly, it is true, but how long will it last? To lose all the ground we have gained by twenty-four consecutive hours of forced march would be too painful!

Just before we reached Fredonia, in Pennsylvania, the wretched chain-wheel broke again, and naturally the car stopped. Haaga and I had to walk on foot in search of a village or a house. We effected a repair, returned, and resumed our journey, still afraid of every stone over which our wheels passed. Between Fredonia and Ripley the chain-wheel broke a second time. Another stop, another pilgrimage in search of a garage, another repair, and on once more. Ah! If it will only hold out we shall arrive at Erie. But it does not hold out. A little beyond Ripley, some thirty miles from Erie, there was a third smash. It is too much for our patience. We have neither the means nor the will to make another repair. For twenty-six hours we have not closed our eyes. For twenty-six hours our bodies have laboured and suffered. We will stop. We will wait until the morning and go to Erie in search of assistance. Fortunately, however, there is a shop where Haaga—that good German—works all night, so that his car—the Italian car—may be ready. There is also

an inn in which we eat, but do not drink ; and where we sleep upon beds which are like rocks of pumice-stone. But anything is better than the car, even pumice-stone. The De Dion and the Thomas have passed during the night, and gone on towards Erie in chase of us ! During the night we heard them for an instant, throbbing under our windows.

February 18.—Poor Haaga worked all the night and half the morning without taking a moment's rest. He was overcome by sleep beside the vice, and the file was slipping from his hand, but he saw the dismantled machine in a corner and remembered. By looking at the car he was able to resist temptation. Towards eleven o'clock we resumed our journey ; this time, at any rate, the repair seems to be definitive, and if this diabolical chain-wheel will remain intact, we shall be able to recover all our lost ground. But we no longer know anything of our competitors. We are alone and against all of them in this terrible contest. Of the Protos, the Motobloc, and the Sizaire, which are behind, and of the Thomas and the De Dion, which are in front, we know nothing. One thing only we know, and that is that we must arrive first. We must overtake and pass them. "Züst or bust."

Meanwhile the sun has come out : a dingy, wintry sun, which reaches us without light and without heat. But the snow which chokes the fields, and the great, shining mirror of the lake take on rosy tints under the touch of his rays. The whole landscape smiles with him. At two in the afternoon we arrive at Erie, and stop in a square to replenish our supplies. From here to Chicago, if our strength holds out, we shall make only one stage, without stopping for the night. The

day is warm, although the sun, held up on the tops of the high buildings, does not reach the streets, and the square in which we wait while the machine takes in a supply of petrol and oil is absolutely deserted. One Italian only—and he is a candidate at a local election which is taking place to-day—comes to meet us, impelled by patriotic scruples, although all his thoughts are fixed upon the ballot box. We, too, are pre-occupied by the Thomas car, on whose heels we are fretting night and day, and we listen unwillingly to the offers of our compatriot.

“Do you want to drink, to eat, to smoke?”

I end by accepting, and go with him along the deserted street towards a distant café. The large room, on whose walls a troop of fauns gallop in chase of a surprised nymph, is full, crammed with people and blue with smoke. On the shaggy breast of a faun hangs a great red card on which many wise things are written against drunkenness. They conclude with the single article of the Temperance Bill which forbids sellers of beer, wine, liqueurs, and similar poisons to sell those same liquids. But the intemperate wisdom expressed in sonorous periods on the card, and the law which sums it up, are evidently only for the impertinent fauns on the wall, since it is precisely beer, wine, and other poison that the waiter offers without the least hesitation, and without scruple, almost before we can seat ourselves at one of the tables. But it is not only beer. For beside the beer is a large glass of water and a plate containing three or four sandwiches of chalky bread and rancid bacon. The water is never drunk, and the sandwiches grow greyer from day to day. But they are not for the customer; they are for

the policeman. When, in fact, one of these persons in authority arrives in the room, the beer and the spirits disappear in a moment under the chairs, and on the table remain the austere water and the forlorn sandwiches. The man of the law passes—sees the beer under the chairs; sees the water motionless in the full glasses; sees the bread all dry with mould and age. Then, solemn and dignified, he withdraws, conscious of a duty faithfully fulfilled for the benefit of humanity. As soon as his back is turned, the beer rises again to the table, and the water and sandwiches slowly emigrate towards the kitchen. The law has gone in company with the policeman. ✓It is needless to add that this law is the pride of America, and that its immediate result has been to increase cases of delirium tremens by twenty per cent.✓

We went on towards Cleveland, through a magnificent avenue of pines, along a splendid, hard, level road. There was not a jolt, not a shock, not a bump. We glided quickly along like a boat going with the current of a river. Then, at the end of this reposeful parenthesis, there were lights, tall houses, men, wide streets—Cleveland!

At the hotel where we pulled up for food they gave us news of the Thomas and the De Dion, which had passed fourteen hours before without stopping. Forward! At eleven o'clock, having stayed an hour, we go on. It snows lightly in little flakes which look like wandering butterflies, and the road is not at all bad. Forward! The Gearless car still precedes us, showing the way, and we travel in the tracks of its wheels. For the first twenty miles an interminable herd of villages strays across the plain and along the edges of the road. Then

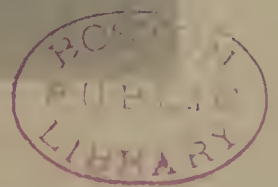
come colossal trees which the snow has dressed in white, and beyond them is the infinite plain. Not one brown thing emerges, not one stone stands out in black on all this dazzling whiteness which pains the eyes. There is nothing but a limitless ocean of white. The going is easy, the road smooth, and we take no count of the hours until night gives place to dawn.

February 19.—We stopped at a little village to take a hasty drink of coffee, and then continued our career, always impelled by this frenzy to rush quickly through the wind. Toledo is still a long way off, as the farmers, whom we see at the doors of their houses, tell us, and the other cars are also far ahead. Who knows how far? We must hurry onwards; hurry on while we have breath and life. The road has become as bad as possible. It has a ridge in the centre like the backbone of a mule. The car must be kept rigorously in the middle of the road without permitting the slightest deviation either to right or left, and the effort of maintaining it thus is tremendous because the direction is most uncertain. The wheels skid violently at every yard, and the machine makes horrible bounds from right to left, as though it had gone mad. Sirtori has to double himself over the steering-wheel and use all the strength of his hands to correct the capricious jerks. Every ten yards or so his hand loses its grip and the machine inclines perilously towards the ditch. At every moment we are prepared for a fall. We are travelling, as it were, along a cord stretched across a great ravine. But we do not fall. The car oscillates, totters; but keeps its equilibrium as though it were held on the track by a mysterious and friendly hand. For if we had fallen we should certainly not have arrived





THE DOG "ZÜST."





at Toledo at two o'clock in the afternoon. We should doubtless have remained there, buried in the snow, and should have had to dig ourselves out.

We started again after a hot meal. The hostile cars are preceding us by nearly eight hours. It was getting on for sunset when we left in a violent wind which cut off our breath almost in our throats, while around us whirled a hurricane of snow. The terribly bad road, broken into ruts heaped high with snow, passes over mountains and through plains in a continual succession of steep ascents and precipitous descents. The almost imperceptible track disappears beneath a thick, soft layer of snow which fills all the furrows and hollows, and blunts all the angles. It levels everything like a flood. Snow is everywhere. Our good machine, which for two days and two nights had worn out its strong members without repose, advances with tremendous efforts, foot by foot, along this ploughed field which is pompously called a road. It rolls and tosses, and creaks in every fibre. Before us, behind us, on every side rages a whirlwind, full of howls and groans. A thick vortex of snow blinds us. It is not snow, it is not ice that is hurled against us in an impetuous cloud; it is fragments of glass, needles, and pins which penetrate our insufficiently covered faces and wound us. It is not a wind, not a hurricane which careers furiously across the plain; it is a gigantic sword, shaken by an unseen hand, and it cuts our skin. All around us not a light is to be seen; not a house raises its hospitable roof. It seems as though a hurricane had passed and swept everything from the ground, all life, all houses. Across the sky there gallops a wild cavalcade of black clouds pregnant with rage. They hurl themselves against

each other and give battle, and the air is full of their clamour.

We drive on, sitting close together, one beside the other on the front seat so as to keep warm, and locked tightly together so as to withstand the bumping of the car. It is only with difficulty that we are able to make our way in the deep snow, but still we advance. Our next goal is Waterloo, a village ninety-three miles from Toledo, but it seems to be far off and as unattainable as the land of Canaan in this dreadful night.

The storm rages with ever greater violence, and the whole plain is full of its roar. The wind howls against the vibrating telegraph wires, and the snow becomes deeper and deeper. In the noise of the hurricane, which expends all its force against us like a wave against a rock, our voices are lost and the throb of the machine drowned. We understand nothing and feel nothing. The car tosses aimlessly about like a cork on a boiling sea. The thermometer has descended to 13 degrees (Fahr.) below zero, and the water cracks the bottles. The corned beef is frozen hard and we have to break it with a hammer and chisel. Even the albumen in the eggs consolidates. Just before reaching Bryan—it was two o'clock in the morning—we had breakfast, placing pieces of the meat and some eggs on the smoking radiator before eating them. In spite of the thick gloves and in spite of the masks of fur which almost completely cover our faces, the intense cold penetrates to our skin and the tips of our fingers. A painful pricking is felt in the soles of the feet and along the spine. But it is our feet that particularly suffer. The cold makes them swell, and it seems that they will be bruised and broken every moment against

the hard leather of our boots. To put an end to this torture we remove all the boards from the floor of the car, and warm our feet on the glowing tube of the exhaust.

We pass villages and houses, all shut up and dark, dimly perceived in the storm. A tyre bursts and we dismount and change it. It is an atrocious torment. Haaga is so tired by his night of watching and fatigue that he falls asleep in the snow, and we have to rouse him hurriedly, lest he should be frozen to death.

At dawn the gale gives us a few moments' respite. But the snow has increased and falls heavily. It is piled in enormous drifts, into which the Züst often sinks. We liberate it and continue. Haaga is at the wheel, I at the pump; Sirtori is behind, crouching on the petrol tank. Gradually the tremendous fatigue of these forty-eight consecutive hours of labour overcomes and conquers me. It is a sort of *engourdissement*, a species of torpor which steals over my members by a thousand unknown ways and makes itself master of my tired brain. I feel as though I am slipping slowly down into the shade . . . it must be the heated stove in my house, and somebody comes to tell me that breakfast is ready. . . .

“Scarfoglio, the pressure is falling!”

Voices seem to have struck me. My hands make an instinctive mechanical movement. . . . But why are they in such a hurry? What is all this crowd at the door of the theatre? It is useless to push. They will fall. . . . A violent shock recalls me. Haaga asks with a smile—

“Asleep?”

“No, I am thinking.”

The restful parenthesis begins again to loosen my muscles and visions of tranquil homes pass before my eyes. I do not know whether I am asleep or awake, whether my eyes are open or shut. Certainly my mind is absent and far away. It is recalled every now and again by the voice of Haaga or by a violent jerk.

“The pump! The pump!”

A shock, a feverish movement, and then dreams again. . . . A man descending the stairs has knocked against me, a man dressed in black, stout, and walking quickly. He was sliding. . . .

We all fall violently in the snow, hurled out of the car. The Züst has turned over on its side and is buried in the snow, looking like a great wounded whale cast up on the sea-shore. It is buried up to the engine cover, and the engine has stopped because the snow, breaking down the steel defences which protect the vital parts, has penetrated into the magneto and the carburettor.

Haaga begins to work serenely, then slowly he grows nervous. It is necessary to remove the whole carburettor and the tubes, which still contain water—liquefied snow. The operation is an extremely long and wearisome one, and our hands are scalded on contact with the iron. It takes a whole interminable hour to replace everything and get the motor to work again. Then we take up our spades to dig away the snow. Our hands, paralysed with cold, can hardly grasp the implements, and our feet suffer horribly against the hardened leather of our boots. Sirtori looks at the thermometer suspended outside the body of the car.

“Twenty-seven degrees below zero!”

With no gloves, with hands swollen and painful, buried up to the thighs in snow, we begin to dig the car out. But the drift is an enormous one.

We work without heart, automatically. The spades seem to fall by their own weight rather than through any effort of our muscles. We are weak, exhausted, incapable of thought or effort. A mad idea takes possession of us—we want to stretch ourselves in the snow and sleep.

Towards five o'clock we succeeded in getting the motor to work, but the oil was frozen in the tubes and the water was circulating badly, although we had put liquefied snow into the radiator and thawed it with a benzine lamp. However, we make the attempt. Haaga goes to the steering-wheel and Sirtori and I push with our shoulders, digging our feet into the snow. When our hands touch the metal on the body of the car the skin of our palms remains attached to it. The pain is atrocious. One of Sirtori's ears was also injured by a corner of the engine cover, which tore him as it was being replaced. We have to rub all the metal parts of the car with vaseline before we can touch them, and the anointing has to be renewed every ten minutes. We push on. The engine, chafing furiously, makes every effort, but the car does not move an inch. We brace our muscles, push desperately with arms and legs, with all our body and strength, but the car will not budge. Again we take up our spades. When will this torture finish? The whole journey now appears pictured before our eyes as a long succession of days of toil. We have fixed in our minds a calender of fatigue, and our only joy will be to

scratch off a day at every sunset. The certainty of one day finished, cancelled, will give us the power to react against discouragement and weakness. But now? We have no more blood; our muscles are exhausted. Where shall we find the necessary reserve of energy? Shall we ever get out of this *impasse*?

February 20.—Slowly the day dawns over the scene of our desolation. A subtle wound of light splits the dark sky in the east and lengthens quickly across the horizon. Leaning on our spades we still wait, without hope and without illusions. We wait for some sort of assistance—a man, a cart, a motor-car, something that we cannot precisely define. We cannot do anything else. We have consumed all our energy and all our will, and can only wait. At ten o'clock a motor arrives and tows us out of the snow-drift. There were several men and they had brought plenty of ropes. We did not move a finger; we watched them work. They did not say a word to us; but I think they must have been rather astonished by our apathy. We arrived at Bryan towards eleven o'clock, at Waterloo at two. We ate on the car, the usual corned beef and biscuits. It was a laborious road, but one that required no excessive effort and there were no mishaps. The sun sank just as we passed Leicester.

We push doggedly forward in the snowless night. In some places the going is rather heavy, and we are compelled to dismount and dig away the snow. Other stretches are smooth and level. It is cold still, but not so cold as the previous night. But our boots are damp with all the water they have absorbed in the past four days, and our feet are frozen. Towards ten o'clock that which yesterday was a slight *engourdissement*, a





AT LIGONIER.

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torpor of the brain, becomes an invincible lassitude and weariness which overcomes us at the most unexpected moments. At eleven o'clock it is a torment. It has overcome all our fibres, arrested the blood in our veins, and weakened our nerves. It is no longer the force of the will which urges us forward, not the desire to reach a distant goal, but a species of automatism. Where are we going? To Chicago? To Paris? Or are we travelling along an infinite road without knowing whither it leads or where it will end?

Thus we continue, sliding along in the snow which reaches almost to our mud-guards.

Our good *Züst* is also exhausted. It is three days and three nights—seventy-two hours—since it had a rest and its cogs and mechanism were cleaned. Seventy-two hours of enervating fatigue without a truce! It cannot keep on, and at the first obstacle it stops. We ought to dismount, dig, and push, but not one of us moves. We have no more strength for fighting. One sole desire fills our minds. It is to cease every effort, to rest, to close our eyes behind the veil of the eyelids. This desire deprives us of all energy, and we do not attempt to dismiss or combat it. Sirtori leans against the wheel and we press close to him, under the sky, without any covering, press close to keep ourselves warm. And then a pleasant sensation creeps over us. It seems that we have been immersed in a perfumed bath and all the blood is flowing through our opened veins. . . .

February 21.—Some teamsters who discovered us when they were passing, and who were astonished to see this great brown animal buried in the snow, awoke us at daybreak. Laughing, they pointed out to us, about a mile further along, a group of cottages. It was

Kendalville, that is to say, a place of refuge, the Land of Canaan, at whose very gates we had arrived last night with all our forces spent. We rejoined the De Dion finally at Kendalville; and we slept.

February 22.—Hope returned with the sun. Kendalville, with its variegated houses, bathed in an unaccustomed light, appears more beautiful, perhaps, than it did yesterday, because yesterday we saw in it no more than a harbour of refuge after a painful voyage. We should have liked to stay there—the beds were so good, and our sleep so refreshing. But the thought of the journey on which we are launched at the heels of the Thomas car, which precedes us by a hundred miles, puts an end to all our desires. We take the road again between two lines of people who press around us, and we are once more bowling along on the hardened snow.

At five hundred yards from the town our impetus, which appeared to be formidable, is arrested against a bank of snow which reaches half-way over our wheels. For a few yards the engine keeps going and the wheels cut like plough-shares in a furrow. But then our good Züst, with all its force expended, comes to a stop. The obstinate warfare against the hostile road begins again. When the obstacle is overcome the machine advances. A mile further on there is another barrier. The snow has been heaped up again by the wind, so the spades, the ropes, and our shoulders resume their laborious work. This is repeated every five hundred yards, and becomes more frequent as we proceed towards Lake Michigan. The country people whose aid we ask smilingly refuse and candidly confess that they have smoothed the way for the Thomas because it was an

American car ; but they cannot move even a finger to help us to overtake it. It is useless to tell them that the race does not finish at Chicago, or at San Francisco ; that it is a long way to Paris, and that our route does not always traverse American soil. It is useless to promise them money and to lay before them the most cogent and convincing arguments on the obligations of hospitality. All they know, all they care, is that the American machine must conquer. It is a beautiful example of patriotism ; but it is a terrible thing for us.

It is a monotonous *via crucis* for hours and hours across the same country with the same houses and the same people, with no variation in the torment and the repeated difficulties. We suffer from vexation rather than from fatigue. And yet everywhere on the road the villages—little unknown villages—are *en fête*, and their streets are crowded with people who come out in the sunshine and deafen us with whistles, which, as we are told, are signals of enthusiasm. Along the fields and on the road, before us and behind, marches a procession of people accompanying us on sleighs. We get along, however, slowly in the midst of this interminable cortège, which moves with us and stops when we stop, but regards us with Olympic disdain when we chafe against the frozen barriers.

Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, after seven miles of road traversed in five hours, the going becomes absolutely impracticable. The snow lies everywhere at a uniform depth of more than two feet, and we must renounce the road and take to the fields, where the snow is not so deep. With axes we beat down the slender wooden fences on which are advertised the best medicines and the best boots of South Bend.

Then our dear Züst crawls through the open breach and staggers across the furrows of the fields. Haaga precedes on us foot, plunging his stick into the snow and showing us the tracks to follow over the uneven ground. The Züst advances, assuming the most fantastic positions, bumping terribly on its springs and creaking under the frequent shocks. Horses at liberty in the fields flee from us, mad with terror. They gallop in a compact body without finding anywhere to escape except on to the snow upon which the sleighs are advancing. The procession continues, and every village adds its contingent.

Gradually Sirtori, who is getting excited, increases the speed, and we almost run into the herd of horses and between the sleighs and the men, who seem also to be seized with frenzy.

“Go ahead. Go ahead!” they shout to us.

The farmers urge on their horses. Sirtori presses the accelerator and the herd flies off with their noses to the wind. I could not remain on the car with its complicated rolling and tossing from left to right. I had joined Haaga, and without noticing it had got ahead of him. Through a break in the fence I got on the road again in advance of the horses and sleighs, and was soon in sight of Ligonier, whose population had turned out to meet us. We were greeted with a storm of applause as our car, steaming like a horse after a hard race, pulled up before the door of the first hotel.

February 23.—We passed the night at Ligonier, because we were too tired to go any further. This morning we were late in starting, but made a sufficiently good journey. At noon we arrived at



AN AMERICAN "ROAD."



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Goshen, twenty-two miles from Ligonier, and left immediately for South Bend. Three motor-cars came from South Bend to meet us, and showed us the way, so that our progress was easy. But at one spot it was impossible to continue along the road and we had to travel on the railway line. It is not a very pleasing mode of travel for one who suffers from the stomach, because it is rather a violent mode of digestion; but it is certainly useful for any one who wishes to end his journey quickly. In fact, the stars were scarcely lighted in the heavens when the houses at South Bend appeared. A good journey to-day, thirty-seven miles!

February 24.—We had a wish to remain two days at South Bend, but the incubus of the De Dion, which had remained *en panne* in a little village with its change-speed gear broken, and which yesterday resumed the terrible road to Chicago, urged us onward. So we departed without taking breath. The machine itself seemed to understand that we were calling upon it for an effort in the name of the country where it was born. Its engine throbbed violently through the wide streets of South Bend.

But it throbbed to little purpose, alas! Our habitual enemy, the snow, to whose attacks, like the inhabitants of a besieged village, we are by now accustomed, raises before us an insuperable barrier two miles from the town, which has just disappeared in the morning mist. It is a last effort which this terrible Indiana makes against us, the last parting shot, but too cruel. Good will and good muscles are insufficient. We must have recourse once more to our nearest ally—the horse—to enable us to get over the difficulty. Two horses are yoked to our inert, lifeless machine, but the snow

in which it is buried will not give way. The poor animals forget the numerous offences and the continual wrongs inflicted upon them by the automobile; they pardon everything, and with praiseworthy generosity plunge their feet into the hard snow and brace their muscles; the veins stand out under their moist skins, and their withers tremble with the effort, but the *Züst* remains immovable. Two other horses are brought, and after further efforts the battle is won.

At least, not the battle, merely the first skirmish. We have scarcely gone ten yards before we have to summon the horses again. Whether we like it or not, we must conclude a definite treaty of alliance, with six horses altogether, which haul us as far as Michigan City. From our guides we learn that the Thomas before us had been hauled by ten horses. And thus, along the so-called roads of old America, through forests of pines, across hills and paths which until now had not known the bite of a motor-car wheel, there advances a strange cortège. Six other horses are pulling the Studebaker, another American machine which left New York with us, and had only now overtaken us. The horses are all mounted by cavaliers who ride without saddles, and another crowd of people follow us on sleighs, on horseback, or on foot, like a bodyguard. A whole village is depopulated to form our suite, and we sit in the midst of them with that magnificence with which the old kings of France were wont to pass amongst their subjects. Thus regally we arrive at New Carlisle, where the bodyguard is renewed and we get fresh horses.

But the end of the day is not so brilliant as the beginning. The snow is more than three feet deep and six horses are insufficient. They tug and strain, but to no

purpose. We must follow on foot. Sirtori only remains on the car to guide it. Towards nine o'clock, when the dark night has fallen, the horses can proceed no further, and a road must be dug through the snow for the car. The cold has become intense, and a glacial wind lashes our faces. Our hands shrink on contact with the handle of the spade, and the skin of our fingers sticks to the metal of the car when we push against it. But the Thomas is ahead, and the De Dion on our heels. Forward! Forward! So we proceed, leaving a little of our strength and a little of our will at every bend of the interminable road.

An hour after midnight we find ourselves at Rolling Prairie, and beyond this we cannot go. Haaga falls asleep on his feet, and three times Sirtori lets the steering-wheel slip from his torpid fingers. The horses steam with perspiration and breathe violently. We stop and sleep in a draper's shop. The talkative, wiry old man receives us paternally, and we sleep on the counter, in the midst of coloured ribbons and artificial flowers, near a glowing brazier. But to our wearied limbs the bed seemed the softest we had ever found.

February 25.—We awoke at five o'clock with bones still aching, and left while the stars were still shining in the sky. But the horses, after their good rest, were full of courage, and we advanced with ease. Between Rolling Prairie and Michigan City the country is almost uninhabited. Forest is succeeded by open plain, there are solitary houses, and a few melancholy birds which appear to have mistaken the season. Michigan City, where we arrive under a pelting rain, is full of people who clamour and cheer us with enthusiasm; but, anxious to push on, we pass quickly through the crowd.

We are stopped by Mr. Picquart, of the Chicago Motor Club, who invites us to wait for the De Dion, so that we can proceed in its company towards Chicago. We wait. At night we go on.

February 26.—The snow gives us another respite, and the road towards Chicago is unusually benign. Daybreak finds us at Edgington. Haaga, who has steered all through the night, is tired out and sleeps, rolled up on the back seat like a cat. The De Dion follows us. At nine o'clock we both stop at a little village perched on the edge of a snow-clad hill. A sleigh, sent by the Italian Consul at Chicago, Signor Sabetta, and driven by Signor Trevisonno, brings us the greetings and good wishes of the Italian colony, and then joins the procession which follows us. To us it seems that the bonds with the world which leads an easy life have been knotted again.

At Hobart a crowd of automobiles awaits us with the customary army of photographers. Cheers, speeches, ovations. When it is all over, when speeches have been delivered and hands shaken, we proceed. For the last twenty miles we did not see a break in the houses. We passed through a mass of grimy suburbs—Hammond, Jackson Park, South Chicago—all little satellites of the great planet, swarming with people, black with smoke, noisy and obscure in the advancing evening. We enter Chicago at night amidst a group of automobiles, all blazing with Bengal fires, we alone being dark and poor in the midst of so much luxury. Applause, which is seen rather than heard, lights, a fluttering of banners, our names on the tip of every lip, our hands seized by hundreds of other hands, and then flowers, flowers, flowers!

## IV

### IN THE MUD

FEBRUARY 28.—To see Chicago I wished to be alone and calm, without witnesses, when the echo of applause had died away. I spent a whole day in traversing its busy and sombre streets, with nose to the wind and eyes to heaven. About the American towns there is a very strange thing—they have developed, and can only be seen, along a rigid vertical. The horizontal does not exist and has no geometrical value for them. Their architectural spirit has the same habit as fire and smoke—it must rise and touch the sky. They have the same contempt for the ground as plants and equestrian monuments which, supported on formless bases, raise their vainglorious heads to the sky as high as possible. They convey the idea of being bound to the soil by force and of wishing at every moment to detach themselves and soar still higher. The street is a consequence and not a reason. It is a resultant and not a determining cause. It exists because the houses cannot all stand together, not because it is useful. And it has neither fascination nor mirth. Under our civilisation, the street is not only useful, it is also beautiful, and a man is complete and perfect as a citizen in so far as he loves the street and takes pleasure therein. This is not so in America. The street has the same importance and value as an electric tram-car or the

carriage of a lift ; it is merely a means of communication and traffic. We rejoice in the streets and rest there from our work ; the Americans make use of them as places for toil and labour. Their life and all their mentality has developed along the vertical like the jet of a fountain. In our case the shops are a pretext, places where women can show themselves off and where men can follow them. In America they are really used as places where things are sold !

Altogether it is in the order of things and of races that this should be so. We have a civilisation which has grown in strata by successive aggregations. The Americans have one which shot up from the fertile ground in a single day, like a fungus. ✓ Our progress has followed the horizontal line ; theirs a decided vertical. ✓ We have a large concept of a smooth and harmonious life with varied forces and innumerable pleasures, all combining to form an organic whole from which there results a certain proportion of enjoyment. Their conception of life is naked, rigid, skeletonic, like a spear held upright. Their life is focussed on one single enjoyment, intent on one conquest. They have their eyes fixed upon a far distant point, and they cannot see anything on either side of them. We, on the other hand, are compelled by necessity to embrace the whole horizon and to enjoy everything in order that one single pleasure may result.

I do not like the Americans as a whole, just as I do not like the cheesemonger whom a prize in a lottery or a sudden rise in the price of potatoes has made wealthy. There is still too much of the herdsman about them and their clothes are still permeated by the smell of the soil. Riches alone do not justify everything. The

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opulence of others is always irritating, but that of the Americans is particularly so, because it is paraded, thrown proudly in your face, and shown about as the only true sign of greatness. It is impossible that we others should not be hurt by this stupid idea of existence. For us money is a means and not an end. Wealth is a road, but not a goal. Gold can form the steps, but not Paradise. A coin has for us a value in relation to the amount of pleasure which it can buy in the market. In America it has the absolute value of its volume in precious metal. In America you cannot buy happiness with money; money itself is happiness. For all these reasons our souls are revolted by these people. Their coarseness irritates and wounds us. Our physical and intellectual habits are offended by contact with all this coarseness and their strange ideas of progress—if progress consists in fast trains and pounding madly along the streets in a furious hurry.

The real truth is that the Americans are a primitive people; all the refinement and the education which generations of English civilisation had placed in the veins of the passengers of the *Mayflower* have been destroyed and suffocated by the mountains and the forests. A hundred years of life on horseback, cheek by jowl with nature, has brought this people back to its primitive instincts and impulses, and destroyed in one century the slow work of fifteen. Nature sometimes gains these violent victories. Having found fortune at the bottom of a "placer," they have abandoned the forest but not the customs of forest life. The result is a civilisation which is entirely muscular and material, a life which finds its best manifestation in movement and its chief victory in money. We waste

our existence in producing works of art and beauty ; they destroy it in hustling after wealth. They have no mental or nervous life ; they live by the body and by the body alone. Perhaps they are right and we are wrong. Perhaps it is in the muscles and not in the nerves that the secret of happiness is hidden. But perhaps also—and even without the perhaps—we are better than they. For if they have found the secret of power, we have found that of beauty, and if they have sought and found happiness in the mountains of Nevada or in the oil wells of California, we have not gone so far to find it. We have stretched ourselves under a fig-tree in a rosy dawn and thought of Parthenope.

Chicago, by its smoke, reconciled me with America. Toil, also, has its poetry and its beauty. And these clumsy mammoth houses with their great doors, and roofs weighed down by ridiculous little turrets, are vested with a particular kind of beauty. They are all browned by the smoke which is an essential element of the atmosphere. Chicago is completely brown from roof to pavement, from the trees to the sparrows which hop about the streets. The smoke has invaded and blackened everything. At first sight the city looks like one of those fantastic cakes which confectioners of genius concoct out of chocolate and nougat. It is interesting at first, but ends by appearing almost beautiful. It is its loyalty which makes it lovable. It is not ashamed to be dressed in its working clothes and to spread out its toil-blackened hands. I do not know whether Chicago has a Capitol and a Panthéon, or any other of those grotesque horrors which are characteristic of American towns, but they cannot be seen ; they are blackened and transformed by the greasy smoke

which circulates in the air. And Chicago does not give one the sense of repulsion which one experiences at Washington or at Albany, and to a certain extent, all over America. Chicago lives by smoked pig, boasts of it, and shows it in its dress like a good labourer. It is only possible to like American towns when they are full of smoke, noisy with labour and the shrieks of steam sirens. ✓ In a country such as this, where labour is everything, it is only logical that the people should live in the midst of it, and that the houses, the men, the trees, and the birds should carry the imprint of it without any shame. ✓ As one could not understand an American who did not work, so one could not think of an American town that is white and polished. ✓

February 29.—We left Chicago late this morning amidst the kisses and smiles of ladies, the cheers and enthusiasm of men, loaded with flowers and good wishes. Before we left the town a squadron of motor-cars accompanied us in a triumphal tour across the smoky quarters, between the infinite rows of buildings which lose their ugly heads in the clouds, and through immense, melancholy, unpeopled parks. Afterwards, when our tour was finished, and there opened before us once more the road which ends at Paris, when the final salutations of the Motor Club had reached us, we remained alone once more to fight our own battle. But it is not a sharp or hard battle, for at last the snow is tired of persecuting us, and to-day, for the first time, we have felt our good pneumatics crushing against the brown road, and our wheels at last bite the earth which they have hardly tasted since we left France, and which they almost despaired of touching again until we reached France once more.

The car, also, seemed to have found its companion, the road, which does not oppose its impetus, but assists and accompanies it.

To-day the engine had a more rapid and joyful throb. The road was not easy, certainly, nor smooth after the havoc played with its surface by the snow. But it was the real road, with its track of compressed gravel and good beaten earth, pleasingly dark after the irritating white which for the last fortnight has blinded our eyes and exasperated our nerves. So to-day we made good progress along the back of our unexpected friend, in spite of a violent rain and wind which whistled around us, in spite of the fact that we twice lost our way, and in spite of the innumerable little mishaps to the De Dion which we are faithfully following. The country round us was varied and pleasant to the eyes—little towns crouching at the foot of a frowning mountain, villages almost buried in a carpet of grass and furze—Wheaton, Elburne, Rochelle. We stop at Rochelle, at a late hour, without having had a single mishap, without our motor having displayed the least irregularity. It was our first calm day; so calm and reposeful that at the hotel Haaga and Sirtori sat down to play dominoes. At midnight they were still playing.

March 1.—The sun was already high in the heavens when we quitted Rochelle. The De Dion had left two hours before us. The sky was sad and grey-looking as always, but there was no rain. Indeed, the ground, moistened during the night, has been frozen and offers a magnificent surface to our wheels, and we spin along rapidly, despite the violent jerks which shake us from head to foot. The road rises into a

multitude of little crests and wrinkles and hillocks. It is cut by deep cart ruts, and our Züst oscillates and jumps. But she travels well enough at about fifteen miles an hour, which for us, who, owing to the snow, have been accustomed to about a mile an hour, is a veritable luxury.

The landscape round us is changed. It no longer consists of sterile fields and plains which know no limits. It is no longer a continual succession for hour after hour and day after day of the same arid, melancholy group of trees, round the same fenced-in cottages. There are forests of green pines, still far ahead of us, which form a dark ring on the horizon. We greet them as a repose to the eyes, which had been tired by so much rigidity of line. Gradually the curtain of trees advances towards us from every side, burying little solitary houses beneath its shade, and advancing towards the brink of the road. At last the road, yielding to the potent pressure, becomes a narrow path through a wood; creeps through dense avenues and rides over terrifying little bridges thrown across frozen torrents.

The De Dion has the advantage of about one hour over us, and we must rejoin it at any cost. Sirtori knows it, and that is the reason why, gradually, without any violence, he increases the speed, and soon we fly along rapidly. We no longer hear the shouts and the cheers from the villages which we traverse hurriedly. We neither feel nor see anything of all the enthusiasm which murmurs and gesticulates around us. The car hardly presses upon its tires; it seems to be flying along like an immense insect, scarcely grazing the soil. We bend down, so as to feel less of the

biting air, our eyes are filled with water, our ears numbed by the howling wind, and our faces scratched by the overhanging branches of trees. But no matter. Forward!

Dixon passes like a shadow, scarcely perceived in the confusion of houses. Then a great steel bridge over the foaming Rock River opens suddenly before us. We pass over it, and once more the wide road opens ahead of us, crossing the immense prairie which extends to the horizon like a vast, calm sea. Enormous herds of cattle and horses stretch their noses over the fences, astonished by this unusual animal which flies so noisily. They watch for a moment in uncertainty, then, seized with panic, fly over the plain. We pass amidst houses and cheering throngs. Passers-by shout to us things which we do not understand. A sort of frenzy has seized us. It is the intoxication of speed, which excites Sirtori to go ever faster and faster.

Sirtori, with the wheel in his arms rather than in his hands, with his head stretched forward and his teeth clenched, drives without speaking. His foot is never away from the accelerator and his eyes are glued to the road. The road resolves itself into a series of narrow parallel ribbons which seem to run furiously towards us.

Since yesterday we have not broken our fast, but we do not stop to eat. All our wants, all our vital functions are suspended; we live at this moment only for this useless race, which finishes for this evening at Stirling.

The De Dion precedes us by half an hour. Forward! All the people who live along our route know of the race and are enthusiastic about it. At every



ON THE RAILWAY BETWEEN BUFFALO AND OMAHA.

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junction of roads men on horseback await us, and gallop forward to show us the way. In the towns, in the villages, the population is lined along the streets, in two hedges through which we must pass. Some make gestures of encouragement, others shout the number of minutes by which the De Dion has preceded us.

Fulton passes like a cinematograph film which is drawn too quickly across the lens. It has hardly appeared before it is again far away. Our wheels are already approaching the gigantic bridge which joins the two banks of the Mississippi before the crowd has fully recovered from the surprise of our arrival. A sharp bend in the road, and then the houses of Clinton. A moment's halt, something is shouted at us, and we are off through the crowd, which has no time to cheer.

The De Dion is only seventeen minutes ahead of us, but the road has become very bad. After we left Clinton the sun had beaten down the curtain of clouds and had dissolved the ice which had made the ground so hard and solid. Now we are navigating in a deep sea of mud. We are still going onward, but not so quickly as before. Progress becomes more laborious. The surface seems to be covered with pitch, which glues our tires to the earth. We toil with the machine, raising it and pushing it with all the strength of our arms when its force is broken and the wheels sink up to the hubs in the mud. The Züst skids terribly, gets out of hand, and takes a drunken zigzag course, striving laboriously to liberate itself from the strong grip of the road. Its delicate organism suffers and chafes against the terrible obstacle.

At Commonche, a village of eight houses and twenty-three inhabitants, we have gained another three minutes.

At De Witt the De Dion is only eleven minutes ahead of us. The road improves and our speed improves with it.

Another village is passed, and some windows are opened whence a smile or a kiss is thrown to us. Night falls. A minute's stop to light the lamps and then—forward, towards Omaha. But our nerves are tired and our backs broken by this frenzied and perilous career, and when Colmar, with its three houses, appears before us, we stop, exhausted. Let the De Dion do what it pleases, go where it likes. We cannot proceed. But even the men on the De Dion are of flesh and blood and they suffer the same as we do, because they had stopped here, at Colmar, only six minutes previously.

We sleep in a granary which an imaginative farmer called the Central Hotel, and our supper consists of milk and cabbages. But in this moment Colmar is the largest and finest, the most wonderful place that was ever destined for the enjoyment of poor mortals, and we are the elect of the elect.

March 2.—We arrive at Cedar Rapids, after a short but fatiguing stage, in six hours. A guide sent by the Cedar Rapids Automobile Club had come to take us in hand yesterday evening, and he led us this morning. We were expected along the road, and school-children were drawn up in files along the edge of the plain to cry “*Evviva.*” As far as Mechanicsville we had proceeded *pari passu* with the De Dion. Then the latter broke its chassis and we pushed on. We enter Cedar Rapids alone and in triumph. Great Italian flags flutter at the windows, flowers are scattered in the streets. In the garage we had to tie the car with ropes and surround it by policemen to keep off the people. At a late hour the De Dion arrived, tired and wounded.

We found some Italians at Cedar Rapids, some twenty of them ; fruit-sellers or confectioners, knife-grinders or boot-blacks, who had all created for themselves in this distant land a certain amount of happiness and a fragment of well-being. They live with one great desire, one great regret—their native country. But this desire and this regret occupy a remote corner in the depth of their souls. They do not bring them out except on days of repose, on Sunday, at home, when their work is finished and their immediate cares have ceased. This is an interlude which they rarely permit themselves to enjoy, and it induces a spiritual and sentimental happiness which is certainly better than all the pleasure derived from perpetual striving after the conquest of dollars.

March 3.—The De Dion Bouton has become fractured in the dangerous game of keeping ahead, and now it lies in hospital with its chassis broken. So we leave Cedar Rapids by ourselves. A pale, timid sun accompanied us along an excellent road. Everything around us, the trees and houses, are coloured under its rays with a sickly tint which hurts our eyes. The road is good and almost hard, thanks to the frost overnight. The line is straight, without a curve, like the blade of a good sword. Sometimes a clump of trees with naked branches dominates the road ; sometimes a house appears on the boundary line of the plain. Now and again the track is broken by a limpid stream which murmurs below a wooden bridge. A few miles from Cedar Rapids the route becomes whimsical again. It begins to wind through forests and glens, to clamber up little heights and descend into valleys ; to follow the tortuous course of reawakened torrents, and bury itself

amidst dense trees until it finally stretches again into the open plain near Tama.

To-day the car travels as it has never done since it started from New York. The wheels glide rather than revolve upon the hard level ground. From the little villages which are situated along our route the population emigrates to salute us. Our course is not such a tiresome one as that of yesterday. It is calm and smooth along a wide road, which for the moment seems as though it might be open as far as Paris. Our journey is restful rather than exhausting.

At Tama, a little town scattered on the sides of three hills, we stop for a moment to receive the homage of a little group of children who offer us flowers and their fresh lips.

Then we start again under the sun, which has freed itself from its ashy veil and kindles a flame in every window-pane. Amidst the dried-up bushes there rise up the poor, abandoned huts of a tribe of Indians. They are skeleton huts, derelict habitations exposed to every wind. Further along, on the brow of the hill, is an Indian encampment, which appears to be inhabited by thirty or forty poor, terra-cotta-coloured wretches wrapped in long black coats. These Indians know English and wear gloves, but they are indescribably dirty. Civilisation and brandy have reduced them to a very low level, and destroyed all the traditions of their race, all their customs, and compelled them, once the masters of this land, to shut themselves up in a "reserved territory" which has scarcely the area of a handkerchief. The women only—and the children—have preserved something of the Indian traditions, and, despite the petticoats in which they encumber their

legs, they clothe themselves with big yellow and red shawls, which cover them from head to foot.

Standing thus on the brow of the hill, the tribe watches us pass. The men salute us with a slight motion of the hand, because they read the newspapers and know who we are and what we are doing. The women, on the other hand, in whom there has remained a certain amount of racial instinct which leads them to fear every new instrument brought amongst them by the palefaces, hide their faces in their hands and in the folds of their shawls, and hastily snatch up their children in their arms. Only when we have passed do the women raise their heads and look at us curiously. Some little distance further along, the road runs again into the open plain, and there the "reservation" of the Indians finishes against a wall of forest.

As we proceed towards Marshalltown the road gradually becomes horrible. The layer of mud gets thicker and thicker, and our wheels sink into the soft clay.

Ever tossing, and insecure on its wheels, which no longer take any hold of the ground, the car proceeds towards the distant town. We assist it out of the sticky mire and push it over the steep hills. On almost perpendicular descents we have to hold it back, because the brakes are impotent against wheels which slip without revolving. This torment is continuous, incessant, because there are miles and miles of this kind of road, always submerged in mud, to Marshalltown, and from thence to Nevada and Ames. Carried over an innumerable series of hills, about 300 or at most 400 feet high, the road finally climbs up a gradient of 42 in 100. The car goes at a walking pace. We follow it afoot as far as Nevada and Ames.

It is only with difficulty that it can carry the weight of the driver. Occasionally we hurry to its assistance when the obstacles become too great, and with much effort we raise it from the mud. We wrest palings from the fences and place them under the wheels to prevent their sinking in the mire. For seven hours we travel on the first speed and the engine suffers terribly. Worn out with fatigue—but not more so than the Züst—we stop at Ames because night has already fallen. We have done 107 miles to-day at the cost of 500!

March 4.—This morning the road is worse than ever. It is worse between Ames and Ogden in the sense that the mud has become deeper, but especially denser, and consequently more difficult to overcome. For the first hour, because the engine has had a rest and is fresh, we get along at a fair speed, which augurs well for the remainder of the day. But there is nothing worse when motoring than casting horoscopes. When we were five hundred yards from the triumphal entrance to Jefferson, where bands and cars were waiting to escort us, when the Züst began to advance on the third speed, we suddenly felt it incline to the right, like a ship that has struck a rock. The crowd round us utters cries of alarm and people run towards us, their arms raised. For a moment we could not understand what had happened or why this crowd was pressing round us so full of sympathy. But an instant later, when calm had returned, the secret was revealed. The bearing of one of the back wheels had split, and the wheel, detached from the axle, was taking flight across the fields. By a miracle the axle itself was not broken.

We are assisted by a body of ladies, who manage spanner and hammer with skilful hands and do not disdain to cover themselves with grime and oil in their anxiety to help us. We do not see even the shadow of a man around us. Men do not exist in New Jefferson, or if they exist they are engaged in slicing ham and weighing sugar in the shops. And it is just as well, because their figures would spoil the harmony and injure the beauty of this district, which to us, and at this moment, is the most smiling in all the United States.

After an hour's delay, we pass through New Jefferson amidst a cortège of ladies, who cheer us and offer us bouquets of flowers. Very touching was this demonstration of feminine enthusiasm, which gave us more satisfaction than any reception we have had so far. It is well, however, that it should be known that at New Jefferson two bottles of whisky and a box of cigars were emptied; but they must have belonged to the few men who had fraudulently mixed themselves with the ladies.

We slept at West Side.

March 5.—Mud, mud, mud! A sea of mud spread over the road, denser and deeper at every mile, more wearisome at every yard. Soon after our departure we were compelled to dismount from the car and to follow it on foot. As in the snow, Haaga, with great india-rubber boots up to his thighs, preceded us, taking soundings. I and Ruland—an American who is accompanying us as far as San Francisco—followed, and the car travelled as it could, sliding and labouring, towards Denison. When all its efforts were fruitless we helped it, pushing and dragging it. We did four

miles in nine hours, four laborious miles which led us to Denison, where there should have been another car to show us the way to Omaha. But at Denison, at one o'clock in the afternoon, we were compelled to stop because it was absolutely impossible to proceed any further. Since the passage of the Thomas car rain had fallen in torrents, and the roads had become a glutinous morass. It is impossible to get on unless the Züst is transformed into a motor-boat. With a sail, perhaps, one might do something.

March 6.—Since yesterday we have yawned with ennui and dejection in this wretched inn, waiting for the sun or wind to harden the road towards Omaha. It rains continually, and we stop here to watch it fall and hear it patter against the windows. Some farmers from the neighbourhood, personages of importance with feet buried in enormous muddy boots and heads hidden under enormous grey caps, watch us, and watch the rain around us with extreme resignation, puffing great mouthfuls of smoke from their pipes. You would hardly think that the land around is theirs; that *their* fields are being drowned, that *they* are being damaged by this deluge. The American, as a rule, does not love the land; he does not care for the wealth which is acquired by slow, regular labour. He is a man of adventure, a man of the sudden, of the unexpected. He is a gold-seeker to-day as he was a hundred years ago, and his joy is in the mine discovered by chance, conquered in a day, worked out in a month, exhausted in a year. Gold, coal, petroleum, it does not matter what, so long as it is a fortune which bursts from the rock at the lucky blow of a hammer.

By his very nature the American is not a man of the





SPORT IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.





fields. He is a nomad by instinct, a traveller by the congenital necessity of his race. In the depth of his soul there seethes a mass of savage energy, of native strength which 100 or 150 years of town life have not been able to repress or neutralise. He loves the air which beats straight against his face; a long, tiring race across the immense plain with his body flogged by the wind. His family begins with him and ends with him. The towns which he constructs are encampments; the houses which he raises are inns; the family which he creates is a partner, a companion for life and fortune. But he does not love, he cannot love the fields with their humble and continuous toil, their regular, daily labour, without surprises and without adventures. He needs to fight for life, to fight and to conquer. His well-being cannot be the fruit of labour; it must be the outcome of conquest and strife.

All day long we have yawned, written, and played innumerable games of cards. Haaga always won; I lost methodically. At midnight, when we went to bed, I had lost many thousands of francs. It should be known, however, that we played for a probable future inheritance, an inheritance which, naturally, will never come to hand. . . .

March 7.—It rains. It is a subtle, dogged rain which falls noiselessly and veils the horizon in a thin mist. It is impossible to start; it is impossible to go out, impossible to move. Play, yawning, and waiting—that is our occupation. We have telegraphed to the manager of the Illinois Central Railway Company, asking for permission to take the Züst along the railway line as far as Omaha. We are now awaiting a reply. The Americans who, with intent eyes and

lighted pipes, watched us play yesterday, are still here. They still watch us stolidly. They give us the impression of being automata placed against the wall of the room, and the only living thing about them is the streak of blue smoke from their pipes. Now and again, however, they start into life, shout for whisky, drink it, and then resume their smoking.

March 8.—The reply came very late, when it was already growing dark, but, nevertheless, we started. The first bullets of a hail-storm were beginning to patter on the sodden ground with a sharp crack like that of a rifle. The railway company has provided us with red and green lamps, has lent us an inspector, and added the *Züst* to its daily traffic. Our passage is to be telegraphed from station to station and signalled to the trains in motion as though we were one of the regular locomotives, and so, as though on an engine, we travel along the iron road, but not, alas, with the same speed. The Illinois Central Line has a single track which is the same gauge as the *Züst*. We travel along the sleepers with one wheel inside and the other outside the rails. Below the track is an embankment twenty feet deep, and beside this precipice we have jumped from one sleeper to another for sixty-seven miles, suspended, as it were, between heaven and earth. So it will be easily understood why the car required twenty and a half hours to cover the distance.

We left Denison at eight o'clock in the evening in a downpour of rain and hail. The air around us was thick and the road almost invisible despite the band of light thrown upon the glistening rails by the lamps. A pilot car which preceded us was also wrapped in darkness, although it, too, carried its red and green

lights. We groped along, with eyes peering into the gloom and the fear of a false move tugging at our hearts. The least deviation of the front wheels could have hurled us to death. We did not see the precipice beside us because the streak of light from the lamps did not extend beyond the narrow ambit of the rails, but we felt it open at our side, and it caused us a most horrible sensation. We knew that a void was open below our feet ready to receive us.

Through the thick veil of water there appeared and disappeared stations, lachrymose with rain, deserted and cold. Strange faces were pressed against the windows of the signalmen's huts. Trains passed beside us at full speed, dragging behind them their tails of light. We dimly perceived the profiles of gigantic bridges; we heard the voices of men grumbling at the rain and giving words of command. And still the rain fell in torrents and cataracts in the abyss beside us. Thus it continued all night, and then over our heads there dawned and broke one of the sweetest and most fragrant days of spring that ever a lover of Italy could dream of. We drank in the odorous air like an intoxicating draught. It was our first day of sun and blue sky after so much dullness and clouds and rain and snow. . . .

It was already night, a night flowered with stars, when we arrived at Council Bluffs and were received by an enthusiastic crowd. On the other bank of the Missouri, far in the distance, we saw the lights of Omaha. From the river, from the factories, the engines, and the motor-cars, a lacerating salute of sirens reached us. The air was full of fragrance and noise.

## V

### THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

MARCH 9.—Omaha has one characteristic ; a characteristic of all towns built at the edge of a mysterious road leading to wonderful, distant countries. It appears to have been built for the consolation of men who reach the last stage of their journey before plunging into the unknown. It is for this reason that it has been made beautiful in spite of its “buildings,” sky-scrapers, Pantheon, and American architecture. It seems to be a large and commodious Italian town, full of sun and beautiful women. There are also flowers at Omaha, flowers and gardens. The damsels who trip along the pavements are dressed in red and blue. They have flowers in their hands, and a whole springtime in their hats. With the sun and the fine golden dust floating in its rays, we thought for an instant that we had hitherto been dreaming, and that we should awaken this morning in one of our ‘own towns, beaten by the perfumed waves of the sea and crowned with roses and violets.

March 10.—From every building and every tower spring proclaims its victories over the short but ferocious winter by the petulant voices of thousands of sparrows. We leave in the glorious sunshine, passing through the army of sightseers along the magnificent road which should lead us to Cheyenne. After two days’ rest at Omaha the car is fresh, and it seems to be filling its



REPAIRS AT PAXTON.

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lungs with the fragrant air after the fatigues of the past days. It seems to have the lively gait of a young horse which has come into the open air after a long rest in confinement. As we traverse the long avenues and interminable streets, houses black with people and pavements hidden beneath the human waves pass before us. Gradually the houses become more rare and the prairie shows itself on the horizon towards which we are hastening.

It is a beautiful day, and the road stretches like a ribbon across an infinite plain five hundred miles long, and who knows how many wide? The eye is almost hypnotised by this colossal sea of grass upon which there is not a house or a tree. It is a wilderness on which is stretched one of those marvellous carpets which the women in the silent harems of Jeddah work for their lords. The grandeur of this spectacle, which is only limited by the remote horizon, comes upon us with a sense of violent stupefaction. Perhaps it is the solitude, the silence (because being so accustomed to it our ears do not perceive the throb of the engine), the sense of littleness in the midst of so much space, that disturbs and saddens us. Something seems to convulse us suddenly and dry up the springs of laughter.

Ordinarily we are quite taciturn on the car. We do not feel any need for speech or exchanging ideas. Each day's journey is like a great parenthesis across which the brain of each of us rides alone. We have one single point of contact, one common sentiment, one common need—to push forward. For the rest we remain almost estranged and indifferent to each other. Each of us lives upon his reveries and illusions; each thinks his own thoughts. Scarcely half a dozen words

are exchanged in a day, and then they are words which belong to the journey and to the car. Sometimes Haaga sings to himself of his own country. Not so Sirtori; he steers without uttering a word for hour after hour, like an automaton.

But to-day I have felt more lonely than ever before, for the immensity and grandeur around us are painful, painful to the eyes and the heart. Hitherto I did not suppose that this was possible. I am convinced of it to-day. And the others are not happy, particularly Haaga, who pictures his home on the horizon, and his wife coming to meet him across the grass with open arms.

At two o'clock we stop in the midst of the prairie. We make a fire of twigs and warm up some concentrated soup. A little corned beef completes the lunch. Then we set off again. We cross the limitless prairie always at an increasing speed in order to get rid of the melancholy sameness which makes the hours eternal. The mud is hard enough to resist the pressure of our tires and the road is straight for miles and miles, close beside the railway, and, like the latter, resembling a regular furrow cut across the immense plain.

Every ten miles or so there is a village or a house. They are poor little wooden houses standing on the edge of the sea of grass. Each one is surrounded by a field, and beside the houses is a church, from the porch of which a grand old man, with the beard of a patriarch, salutes us as we pass. Then the interminable prairie again, for mile after mile. Only in the evening, after a quick journey without an instant's stop or relaxation, and without the motor having for a moment ceased its regular palpitations, do we finally

issue from the straight line and turn into a town which offers a bed for us and a garage for the Züst.

At Grand Island, 191 miles from Omaha, we stop, tired to death and with our bones aching as they did in the terrible days when we pushed the car before us through deep snow, with all the strength of our arms.

March 11.—Still the infinite prairie, but less deserted, less wild. It is broken up by houses and busy villages which festooned the horizon, whose line is broken by grassy hillocks. Herds of horses gallop away as we approach. They are followed by cowboys, who challenge us to a race. Thus we travelled all day under a burning sun. West Kelton, Kearney, Everton, Lexington, and Maxwell pass before our eyes, a confused mass of houses and people. Other towns also cheer our passage through them. At North Platte they wished us to stop, but we continued. At Kerskey we were offered a banquet, but we refused. At Saxton—no, at Paxton, they offered us nothing, but we pulled up. We stopped because a terrible leap into a ditch had broken a pinion in the car and almost smashed our ribs.

Paxton is a village two hundred miles from Grand Island, composed of six houses, a pseudo-inn, and a station. The houses are built of advertisement boards of Suchard chocolate. There is also a mining office, but no miners.

March 12.—We waited all day for the arrival of a new pinion from Omaha. The car was repaired in a blacksmith's shop, standing amidst fragments of ploughs and broken wheels. The population of Paxton—seventy inhabitants, including old men, children, and invalids—assembled around in an admiring group.

They watched in silence while Haaga worked. The blacksmith himself, with hands stuck into his belt, gave explanations on the working of the motor, to which the others listened religiously. Sirtori and I wandered over the plain, each on his own account. We took with us rifles and cameras, but did not fire a shot or expose a film. We wandered aimlessly about for hours for the sole pleasure of feeling the tall grass rustling against our legs.

At six o'clock the train arrived with our pinion. The repairs were effected, and we left. But it was no longer with joy in our hearts as previously. For, as he was taking the car out of the shop, Haaga made a terrible discovery. The chassis of the Züst was cracked on the right side, about half-way between the springs, and only a thin tongue of steel held it together. There was no hope of repairing it properly at Paxton. The only thing to do was to push on—perhaps to Cheyenne—where we should find a suitable workshop. Meanwhile, for our night's journey, we trusted to chance. One jerk, or the slightest yielding of the metal under the weight which it had to support, would finish our journey indecorously in the midst of the plain. It is only to-day that we have thought such an event could befall us, and that our strength, or energy, or will were of no avail against brutal, blind chance. Until to-day we have been inspired by a blind faith and absolute certainty induced by the conviction that our will and our strength could not be weakened; this evening, on the other hand, before our departure, we waver and doubt. We think of the immense unknown possibility which hangs over us, and which at one light blow could beat down all



GETTING OUT OF A DITCH.



IN THE FAR WEST: A CHANGE OF LOCOMOTION.

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our decision, all our desires. *If* the chassis should break to-night!

We travel at a slow pace as far as Ogallala, so as not to tire the machine and because the road was wretched. At least, it was not exactly bad, but capricious, jumping across a series of low mountain chains. It was a constant ascent and descent. The road rose and fell continuously over sand-hills and dipped into clefts, to rise again with a sudden jerk. Sometimes at the bottom of a ravine there was not sufficient space for it to turn, and we had to make long manœuvres and interminable stops. The framework of the car was bent and assumed such shapes as were imposed upon it by the unevenness of the ground. It groaned and creaked in every joint, but it proceeded. We listened to its laments with bated breath. *If* in one of these shocks the little piece of steel which holds it together should break! Every ditch, every rut, every contortion causes us a spasm of atrocious, silent agony. If it should break! . . .

We had not known that we had grown so fond of the car. We had preferred to regard it up to now as a means, a mere instrument, rather than as a friend. To-day only, when death is threatening it, we discover in the depths of our heart a watchful, maternal affection for this complicated organism of steel which our imagination has supplied with life and soul. It is no longer a machine, but a necessary and dear companion, whose efforts must be yoked to ours, by whose energy and strength, united with our own, we must proceed towards a common goal. The mortal wound which it carries in its bones saddens us to-night, not because of the probable interruption of the race, not

because of a dream brutally dispelled, but because the car suffers, and will probably die. It is strange that for the moment we think no longer of the race, of the final stage of this long fatigue. The nomadic, tumultuous life has entered so completely into our fibres, the need of perpetual daily motion has thrust its roots so deeply into our organism, that we have gradually ceased to regard it as an exceptional state of existence. We no longer think of the end and the cessation of this fever; we no longer conceive that all this must have a termination, that there is a mark to be reached. We travel because we always have travelled, and always shall travel. We regard the Wandering Jew as rather an ordinary personage. That is why we grieve to leave the car rather than to leave the race. For it is the companion of our pilgrimage, the friend of our long wandering. And if it should die we should lament it as a lost friend, as a true companion killed by a violent death. . . .

The night shines over our heads, and the sky, brilliant with stars, is limpid and transparent as glass. All around us is the level plain. Great red blazes illuminate it here and there; they are the fires of gipsy encampments in a circle. A shining streak crosses it now and then as a train cuts its way through the night. Then there is a perfect, an immense silence, such as is only found in the open desert. Sometimes the silence is broken by a light caressing wind which bends the grass and whispers amongst the bushes. One hears the lowing of a lost cow, the piercing screech of a locomotive, or the clatter of galloping horses. But beyond this the silence is as crushing and as great as the space around us. We are oppressed by it.

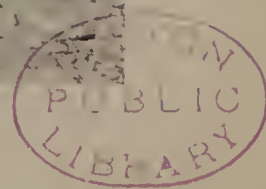




ROCKY MOUNTAINS: REPAIRS IN THE JUNGLE.



ON THE HUMBOLDT MOUNTAINS.





Towards ten o'clock Sirtori begged me to tell him a story to dispel his gloom. I told him a few stupidities and then had no longer the courage to continue. My voice seemed to awaken echoes.

About eleven o'clock we stopped at Ogallala to eat. It has an Indian name, like all these places hidden in the depths of the prairie, in memory of the tribes which once careered across it on horseback from one end to the other, free and strong. Now none of them remain. Drinking bars and whisky saloons have taken the place which was once occupied by a warlike people whose traditions, burned and consumed by fire-water, have completely vanished. Certainly the new inhabitants are not as good as the old. They live a mean life of sordid trade, without blame and without praise. The houses which they have constructed do not present a very flattering contrast with the former variegated encampments rustling with feathers and covered with scalps. The women, banal and pallid, are not to be compared with the superb squaws. I do not know how it is, but all the recollections of tales of adventure read in boyhood which have been aroused to-night by these Indian names seem to have produced a strange nervousness, and cause me to stretch my ears to catch the echo of the prairie. I expect to be overtaken by a galloping tribe, headed by a befeathered chief with raised tomahawk. . . .

We took our meal in a bar, off a zinc table, sitting on very high chairs. A crowd of girls watched us through the windows. They seemed to hesitate and take counsel together. Then one, more courageous than the rest, entered. The whole troop poured into the shop in her wake. She approached me, blushing

and confused, still hesitating, and then, in one breath asked me—

“Will-you-give-me-a-kiss?”

Without replying, I carried my lips to hers. Then the battle began. In the twinkle of an eye we were all seized and plunged into a seething whirlpool of arms and protruded lips. We were dragged from our seats and taken into the middle of the room. We were suffocated. Kisses, kisses, kisses everywhere—on the hair, on the mouth, on the hands, on the clothes; ferocious, violent kisses, given by chance and thrown at us in disordered masses. The girls buzzed round us, disputed for our possession. Held tight, submerged, suffocated by these furies, we defended ourselves as best we could with our arms, shoulders, and heads. We could not see each other except now and again when we perceived an arm waving desperately above the vortex. We groaned and begged for pity.

It was the mammas who came to save us. They began by barking out incomprehensible abuse. At the outset nobody understood a word. Then the vituperations made themselves heard in the midst of the noise of battle, and the strife suddenly ceased. The girls hesitated for another moment, then fled like a flock of sparrows. Bruised and exhausted, we remained alone, faced by the avenging mammas. We looked at each other as though we had just come out of a dream. Sirtori was dolefully feeling his arms. Haaga was lost in amazement. I pinched myself to make sure that I was awake. On the field of battle there remained hairpins, ribbons, flowers, combs. . . .

When we departed the mammas escorted us to the car and stood round us while Haaga was starting the

engine. The girls were hidden amongst the crowd and seemed to have become serious and contrite.

Soon we were once more crossing the boundless prairie which was punctuated here and there by gipsy fires. In the darkness of the night they look like open, vigilant eyes. But the prairie is no longer silent, for the wind has gradually increased and is now singing a mournful song across the telegraph poles. The rustling of the grass resembles the sound of the sea when it is calm and comes to the shore chattering on the rounded shingle. It is a cold wind, which penetrates our furs and blows into our faces a hail of stinging projectiles. And it increases in force. At Huron it is violent; at Pine Bluffs it is a tempest; at Jewelsburg it has become a hurricane; at Kimball it drives against the car like a great wave that breaks foaming over a rock. The plain, which formerly extended before us like an immense lake, has now disappeared, drowned and confused in a vortex of reddish sand which rises like a cloud from the soil. It is only with an effort that the car resists the violence of the wind and advances against it. The sand penetrates everywhere; it gets down our collars and up our sleeves; it cuts our faces and blinds us, despite our goggles. Steering is a difficult task, but to stop here and not get out of this whirlpool of sand and pebbles as quickly as possible would be madness or suicide. As long as the engine has power to advance against the storm we must go on.

March 13.—We go on in fact, with no certain idea of direction, tossing and creeping along, waiting for the dawn to break down this thick reddish curtain of sand. The wind drops when the sun rises. We are

scarcely thirty miles from Cheyenne and our progress becomes more rapid and more easy. The motionless plateau, the stagnant lake of grass is no longer around us. Slowly and gradually hills rise before us. They look like waves on a wind-swept sea; the aftermath of a storm. From thousands of holes there peep out the heads of prairie-dogs—the rats of the prairie. Rabbits dart ahead of us with their ears lowered along their undulating backs. . . .

At eleven o'clock we are within fifteen miles of Cheyenne and at one o'clock only three. Here the motor-cars of the Italian colony at Cheyenne, all gay and festive with banners and filled with ladies, come to meet us. There were many people on horseback and others in light carriages. Greetings also reached us from a locomotive of the Union Pacific Railway on which were more ladies. A wave of people acclaimed us from the pathways, from the windows, and from the roofs. Flowers, kisses, smiles, rained upon us. In the evening, at a banquet, Neapolitan songs were sung. I was deeply moved; one does not wish to hear the songs of home when one is travelling far off and is liable, as I am, to homesickness.

March 14.—At daybreak we were again in motion. The wife of the Italian Vice-Consul, who wished to accompany us for a short distance, travelled in our car. Other automobiles followed. They accompanied us up to a certain point and then said good-bye. There was too much wind for them. We proceeded alone upon a narrow mountain path, overhung by a great wall of rock on one side and flanked on the other by a steep precipice. We had reached the outposts of the Rocky Mountains.



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AT LARAMIE (ROCKY MOUNTAINS).





In some parts the way is so narrow that there is not sufficient space for the wheels, and we are compelled to drive with one wheel against the wall of granite and the other on the path. So the machine advances obliquely, and we follow on foot. At midday we arrived at Laramie, the last town before the mountains, and stop there to feed and to buy furs of goatskin. Then we begin the most formidable journey that ever motor-car has undertaken during the winter. We are to cross the Rocky Mountains, which rise ahead of us, white in the blue of the heavens. At first the ascent is so easy, almost imperceptible, that it is difficult to believe that we are climbing mountains. All around us is the desert ; the true desert, sown with the carcasses of horses and skeletons. No road has been cut, but the direction is marked by hundreds of thousands of wooden posts. There is not a house, not a man, to be seen ; only herds of wild horses and antelopes which gallop before us in a mad race. Crows and ravens hover in the air, waiting until we have passed, to resume their interrupted feast on the body of a dead horse.

The wind continues to rage violently. The solitude is oppressive in its grandeur. Our mind is darkened by the thought that the first house which will rise before us is ninety miles away, and that from south to north for a hundred miles there is not a heart that beats, not a hearth that burns, not a man that works. But in spite of the wind which almost stops our breath, and in spite of the sand which blinds us, in spite of the weariness which pervades all our limbs, we travel on and travel well. The surface is compact and even, and the gradient continuously easy. At five o'clock in the afternoon we have done fifty miles from Laramie,

and are at an altitude of 1500 feet. The wind, which before was only tiresome, has become icy, and snow has reappeared beneath our wheels. At the same time the easy ascent has ended and the terrible climb begins. The snow reaches a depth of two feet, and we have to force the car upwards with our arms. The ascent grows steeper, and the path, full of ruts, passes amidst boulders which it is impossible to avoid, because they are hidden beneath the snow. At last the impetuous, glacial wind prevents us from maintaining our footing. The car no longer follows a decided straight line; it proceeds very slowly while we dig a path for it with spades. We probe the snow here and there to discover the difficulties which have to be overcome. The car sinks into a rivulet, whose frozen surface gives way beneath its weight. Now it remains suspended perilously on the brink of a ravine which is filled with snow.

Meanwhile night has fallen. The guide who precedes us on foot with a great red and smoking torch shows us the road to follow. At nine o'clock we have covered another twenty miles, but the cold chills us to the marrow and cracks the skin of our faces. The snow is now three feet deep. We are at an altitude of 6200 feet. Fortunately the snow is soft and moist, and a way is easily opened by the persistent efforts of our engine and the work of our spades. Otherwise we should be snow-bound.

At eleven o'clock we have done five miles more, always climbing; but we are exhausted and benumbed. We are so tired and done up that we have no longer strength for speaking. Even the guide is exhausted and has re-entered his cart. For five or six hundred



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ROCKY MOUNTAINS: STUCK IN THE MUD.



yards we proceed, always at a venture, searching for spots where the snow is less deep. Then the car comes to a sudden stop and inclines towards the ground. We dismount to find out what has happened, and then perceive that the car has sunk into mud to a depth of about three inches. We manage to extract it, and proceed, but the car stops again. We make further efforts to liberate it, but everything is useless. The wheels are stuck to the ground, and we must seek for other assistance. But the night is dark and cold, and the nearest village is Medicine Bow, fifteen long miles away. It is better to remain here and suffer with the cold and hopelessness rather than face that hard journey in an infernal wind, whose violence it is almost impossible to stand against. So we remain, trembling with cold, sitting in a circle of beams which we have taken from an old "fazenda," round a big wood fire which is fanned by the wind.

Sirtori has opened some old tins of preserved meat and is warming them at the fire. I await the repast without having even the strength to think. A subtle torpor pervades me. Anxiety, anguish, fatigue, all disappear slowly, and I am overcome by sleep. A shout from Haaga awakens me with a sudden start. The car is sinking into the mud! The rims have already disappeared, and the spokes are beginning to vanish. At first I thought it was a hallucination; but no doubt was possible. The Züst was slowly descending into its grave. Can nothing be done to save it? Must we watch it die?

Like madmen we tore down planks from the palisade of the fazenda and made supports to place under the wheels, but nothing availed. We bound the wheels

with chains and yoked ourselves to ropes. We rent our hands and broke our nails in pushing and pulling, but all to no purpose. The car still sank, slowly and inexorably. The mud devoured the spokes and almost reached the hubs. All our efforts only availed to prolong the agony. Standing ten paces away, we watched the gradual disappearance of this superb body of steel, which was our joy, our pride, our very life. Within an hour—two hours, perhaps—it would have gone, and we should see it no more. Yesterday it was still pulsating with life, but now it was dying serenely, without a shock, like a veteran who has reached the end of his life and labour.

At 2 o'clock the front springs had vanished ; at 2.30 the petrol tank behind was submerged ; at 3 o'clock the engine rested on the mud which at half-past three had conquered the gear. The intangible certainty of catastrophe, the immediate imminence of disaster, acts upon our nerves like an electric shock. Our apathy disappears and we stand once more on our feet. Nothing is possible, but we will do the impossible. It is certain that our miserable efforts will not arrest the catastrophe. They can only delay it for an hour. And then ?

Shall we leave our beautiful, strong Züst, our companion, to die ? Shall we stand with folded arms and watch it sink into its grave ? Ah, no, that cannot be. It must not die. There are three of us. We are few, but fourteen miles away there is a village where men live. We can get help from them ; but we must go to seek it. With heads lowered against the tempest, Sirtori and I start our journey, jumping ditches, scaling rocks, fording half-frozen streamlets, but noticing

nothing in the terrible anxiety which urges us forward. We leave pieces of our skin on every stone in the route. We trip and fall over tufts of grass and bushes, but we rise and continue. We tear our clothes and our hands against the nail-clad barriers which protect the railway, but we continue. We have in our brains one fixed idea—to arrive and summon assistance. That is all.

We mount on the railway track and walk one behind the other between the rails with heads lowered, counting the sleepers . . . 1—2—3—4—5 . . . Have we covered a mile? How many hours have we been walking? How many miles are there still to cover? We continue counting the sleepers. We must have counted many thousands. The dawn is near, but the sky is still black in the east. A train passes, throwing in our faces the gleam of its lamps. We have scarcely time to jump aside to avoid it. Sirtori slips, falls, rises, and proceeds. Nothing matters. Onward!

We have lost all notion of time. We know nothing and see nothing. All our brain is fixed on the rhythmic motion of our legs. How many miles more? Our legs pain us; they seem to be fused into one solid piece of bronze. Our eyes are blinded by the sand and we shiver with the cold. Our feet are heavy and seem to be no longer attached to our bodies. We appear to be walking in a nightmare, with our feet nailed to the ground and a peril behind us which we cannot escape. We are consumed by one great infinite desire to finish our journey. How many miles still? Shall we ever arrive? Does Medicine Bow really exist? Forward!

We were completely worn out when the tormenting vision of a house and bed arose. A red light shone. Onward! For another five hundred, another hundred,

another ten yards, and finally a house, a chair, and water to drink. . . . Is it all over? A brief interval, and then we are once more on the road on horseback. Another mad flight through the wind and storm. Haaga rushes towards us, waves his arms, and shouts.

“It has stopped.”

The machine is hauled out of the tenacious swamp; then one more journey; a bridge bending beneath the weight of the Züst; the village; and the house. . . .

Haaga, before entering, kisses the motor.

They awoke us at eleven o'clock. Pebbles carried by the high wind were pattering against the window-pane, but the sun was shining.

March 15.—A bad journey to-day—a wild bounding over the snow-covered mountains, with no trace of road or path, no telegraph poles, no milestones. We proceeded at a venture, casually, across the mountain. For the whole day the car had to pick its way between rocks and through the snow. The landscape was rugged with mountains whose slopes were covered with bushes of mint and thyme, while the higher peaks in the far distance were white with snow. There was not a blade of grass on the ground, but the compact, reddish earth offered a good resistance to our pneumatics. We proceeded as best we could, clambering rather than scaling every crest, avoiding the rocks when we could or kicking them out of the way; losing the road, turning back, beginning again and finding a new passage. At six o'clock, thoroughly exhausted, we stopped at Dana. It is not a station, but a signal-box, a square yard in size, occupied half by a tele-





ROCKY MOUNTAINS.



ARRIVAL AT RAWLLINS.

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graphic apparatus and half by a stove. An old man, a railway employee, lives there, dividing his time between the telegraph and the fire-place. Beside the signal-box is a wooden house. It belongs to a Japanese, a polite little man, who offered us a bed and breakfast. He has five sons who do not work. They stand round him without moving. What he does, how he lives, or why he came to this atrocious desert nobody precisely knows. The old signalman, when we questioned him, merely shrugged his shoulders. He was interested in the Japanese at first when they came, but now he is not. And when we ask the man himself . . . these Japanese have such a strange and embarrassing smile as a reply to all disagreeable questions ; they smile, that is all.

He himself cooked us some eggs and pancakes. Then he gave us blankets, and we slept on the floor, watched over by a great paper lamp. The Japanese knows nothing of us, nothing of the race in which we are engaged, and he asks nothing.

March 16.—We started very late, but on a road better than that of yesterday. It was made for the needs of the coal mines and we were accompanied along it by heavy carts. But we were still surrounded by wild mountains, green with thyme and mint.

Towards two o'clock in the afternoon we reached Rawlins without having met with any accident, and stopped there. It was very cold. We were nearly seven thousand feet above the level of the sea. Naturally there was a banquet, flags, flowers, speeches, kisses . . . *toute la lyre*.

March 17.—These feasts and these courtesies are really fatal. They form an interlude in our daily wanderings and open horizons which we ought to

regard as closed for ever. The women, for example, who shower flowers and kisses upon us, do not know how much harm they do, and how hard they make our journey. Another hour was wasted in having photographs taken and further time lost in seeking a guide. By midday we were *en route*, accompanied by a most remarkable guide, a big, ruddy man dressed in goat-skins, the very type of the coarse, wild cowboy. A lord in this limitless land, the possessor of innumerable flocks and herds, his sway extends as far as the eye can reach. Not a square yard of the land is cultivated, not a seed is thrown to the earth ; but the land is his. Far in the distance the white legions of his flocks can be seen grazing. He is extremely wealthy. He does nothing, never works, and never cares. He came here one day with ten ewes and a ram. Then he waited, day after day, and year after year, while his wealth increased. As pennies accumulate day after day in piles, so he has seen his fortune accumulate methodically, by its own energy and without any effort on his part. His task was merely to watch it increase. Now he is unable to count the heads of his flocks. There are enough to cover the boundless extent of his possessions in a living wave of wool, and his cowboys and assistants form a large army. But what is it all to him ? He does not want money for building towns or purchasing the pleasures of luxury. He is dressed always in rough cloth or goatskins. He did not want his fortune ; it came of itself while he sliced onions for his daily repast. He is calm and stolid, and he eats onions to-day the same as he did twenty years ago, when all his fortune consisted of ten ewes and a ram.

At Wamshuttah, a little village consisting of three

cottages and a barn, we came across three herds belonging to him ; his cowboys challenged us to a race. As they careered madly, *ventre à terre*, they stood on their saddles and discharged rifles. Their variegated handkerchiefs, knotted round their necks, fluttered in the wind like flags. They took us into their shed for lunch, which consisted of corned beef and tinned fish. They ate with their revolvers on the table, bridles wrapped round their arms, and caps on their heads. Thus they live, in a perpetual state of readiness for war. No laws run here ; the only law is that which each makes by and for himself. They know nothing of what passes beyond their horizon, and they see no other men. They have one sound and simple notion of right ; blood calls for blood, and theft calls for blood. They know no police, no judges. Their whole life is lived in the wind and the storm, and they despise the man who is always under a roof. They love nature as a whole without any exclusion. They are great, free men, simple and good. The Americans call them the men of the Far West. I call them simply Americans and I do not know that I am wrong.

We stop at Rock Spring, a hundred miles further on, because night has already fallen. It is needless to say that there was a banquet. Our guide ate with dignity and got drunk with even more dignity. A policeman found him firing his revolver at the electric lamps and placed him in prison.

March 18.—This morning, in consequence of the banquet, we were very late in starting, and we took the wrong road. Fortunately at Rock Spring they learned of our mistake and telephoned to the first village through which we should pass. We were stopped

and turned back. The cowboy of yesterday guides us again to-day, but he does not know the road very well. Indeed, it is not so easy to find one's way across this continual succession of mountains and tableland, of valleys and ravines, all uniform and identical. There is no sign by which one can guide oneself, no path, and no line of milestones. Even the telegraph and the railway line have disappeared. Perhaps they run through some distant valley. We travel towards the west, directing ourselves by a compass. We have no longer any sense of the height or immensity of the mountains. The snow has disappeared and the rocks against which we stumbled yesterday no more encumber the road. Our route lies over a series of arid plateaux with easy ascents. We pass from one to the other imperceptibly. The landscape is uniform, the solitude immense. No rabbits are frightened by our approach, and no herds of antelopes gallop away from us. The only signs of life are the eagles, almost motionless in the air, near the sun.

We travel faster, because the ground is solid and the surface not excessively uneven. We have, it is true, no precise idea of the distance we have traversed or have still to go, but certainly we have done many miles and shall do many more by this evening, if . . . We are brought to a sudden standstill before a river and our illusions are dispelled in a moment. There is no bridge, but a thin layer of ice covers the surface, on which we can see the wheel tracks of the Thomas, which has passed over before us. Will it bear or not? The Thomas crossed, it is true, but that was two or three days ago, and since then the ice must have lost a good deal of its strength. Sirtori finally decides to

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A DRIED WATER-COURSE.





test it, and, putting on big india-rubber boots, he walks on to the ice. It bears for two or three steps, then, with a sinister crack, it breaks, and Sirtori is precipitated into the deep water. He swims to land, wet through from head to foot and shivering. It was useless, therefore, to think of the ice, and we had to find another means of crossing. We searched for the railway line, but had no idea where it was hidden. For two hours we explored, going always towards the north, but in vain. We turned, and still busily searching, went towards the south. But also in vain. After three hours of this worrying quest, we found the wretched line in a parallel valley quite close to us. And there was a station. Here lived a lonely woman, the sole guardian of a signal-lamp, a woman who had gradually got detached from the rest of humanity and become a being by herself. Her body, also, seemed to have been transformed by this continual contact with the wilderness, and her skin and eyes have assumed the colour of it. It is a depressing spot. Trains never stop at her station, but pass quickly through, shaking every beam of her cottage. She sees nothing but the undulating smoke, and hears nothing but the clamour of the train. For six months in the year she does not speak to a living soul. Hence she received us as if we had been angels. She tried to force us to drink, to eat, and to smoke. She spoke nervously, laughing with every word, interrupting herself, losing the thread of each sentence, picking it up again, and asking us the most ingenuous and puerile things.

“Do the ladies in town still wear green?—and black feathers?—and velvet?—and tailor-mades?”

She was very much upset because we were unable to

reply categorically to her questions. It seemed to her that the men who had managed to break through the steel bonds in which she was enclosed should at least know everything, and the fact that we knew nothing seemed to her to be unjust and stupid—like everything else that shatters an illusion.

Naturally she gave us permission to pass along the track, advising us, however, to be careful of the numerous trains. She also wished to accompany us as far as the first bridge, riding astride on a railway tricycle. She even helped us to drag the car on to the track. Then, standing between the rails, she bade us farewell, and, with her hands shading her eyes, watched us until we became dark specks dancing over the sleepers. She was dressed in brown, with short petticoats of maroon velvet and large boots. When we had disappeared I presume she resumed her ordinary life and labour in which our visit was an *entr'acte*.

There were two bridges which we had to cross and which gave us an infinite amount of trouble, owing to the height of the embankment we had to climb in order to reach them. It was almost dark at six o'clock, when we had passed the second.

But, excepting for the two bridges, as a compensation for all we had suffered, the road was magnificent. It was a hard, level, smooth road, along which Sirtori could let the car run. And we ran, with a light purr of the chain, with a quick pant of the engine, which was free at last to give all its strength to the wheels, and with the wind whistling through our clothes. As in all these moments of speed, our thoughts were distracted from the road and the surrounding country, and absorbed entirely in the enjoyment of motion.

The night was now dark and the lights of Granger shone in the distance. Oh, the delight of a bed and the cold kiss of the sheets!

But something has happened. Suddenly, with a violent jerk, Sirtori has veered to the left and jammed on the brakes. Then, mad with terror, pushing me out of the car, he cries—

“Quick, quick! Save yourself!”

I raise myself from the ground, half stunned and with my face cut and bleeding. Sirtori is sitting beside me on the grass; Haaga and Ruland, standing, look at us. The car is motionless at our backs. With a voice which is still broken by emotion, Sirtori explains the situation. He, also, had been overcome by the intoxication of speed and drove thoughtlessly upon the beautiful, straight, wide road. Suddenly there opened before him a precipice towards which we were careering headlong. He had turned the car as much as possible, tried to put on the brakes, and then threw himself out with me. While telling all this his heart was beating in his throat.

We went to look. Twenty yards from us the road was cut off suddenly and fell a distance of about 150 feet. It was cut cleanly, as with a knife. The car had been jerked violently to the left, but it had been too near to the abyss and the wheels had not completely avoided the edge. The brakes had seized, otherwise we should have been smashed and lacerated on the rocks below. The car stood with two wheels suspended over the void and the axles resting on the ground. We realised the certainty of our danger only when the danger had passed. Never before had death approached us so nearly and beaten his wings in

our faces. We trembled with fear when there was no longer any cause for fright. It would have been all over with us but for a miracle. For it was a miracle. Sirtori does not know, and cannot describe the tumult of his ideas at the dreadful moment. He can recall nothing. He only knows that the blood surged violently to his brain, and that with an immense involuntary effort of his hands and his whole body he tried to alter our course. He remembers that his palms were pained by their grip on the wheel, and that the nails seemed to enter the flesh. Then he found himself on the ground beside me.

It was no easy task to extricate the car from its perilous position. The least movement, the least oscillation, might cause the ground to crumble and provoke a catastrophe. We had to proceed slowly, calmly, inch by inch. Haaga and I descended into the abyss, clambering along its perpendicular wall. We were in search of wood, and returned panting under the weight of some railway sleepers which must have been discarded years before. With these we made a sort of platform under the wheels and managed to introduce the "crick." Then slowly, inch by inch, we raised the car. Ruland worked the crick, Haaga, Sirtori, and I guided every movement of the car, holding on to the wheels with all our might. Suspended, so to speak, in equipoise on the crick, the Züst oscillated perilously between the void and terra firma. We were afraid at every moment that it would fall. It seemed to slip at every instant from our hands, and to drag us down with it into the ravine. But with our heels dug into the ground, and our teeth clenched, we pulled and pulled, and at last all the wheels of the car were again on



ROCKY MOUNTAINS : DESCENT INTO DEATH VALLEY.

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solid ground. We were exhausted, worn out with anxiety rather than with fatigue, but we had saved the Züst. The engine was started and we were soon off again into the darkness. Sirtori strained his eyes beyond the gleam of the lamps and drove slowly.

We slept at Granger.

March 19.—It was just after daybreak when we left Granger, driving beside the railway track, across the plain, which was not so smooth as that of yesterday, but broken by ditches and streamlets and covered with a fine layer of ice. The car descends into the bed of the stream or advances slowly across the ice. Sometimes the ice bears and at others it gives way, and only by its speed is the Züst able to get over in time. When the streams or the ditches are too deep Sirtori tries to avoid them, steering to left or right behind Haaga, who goes ahead to find fording-places. We do not make very rapid progress, and at ten o'clock are travelling very slowly owing to the multitude of these pitfalls.

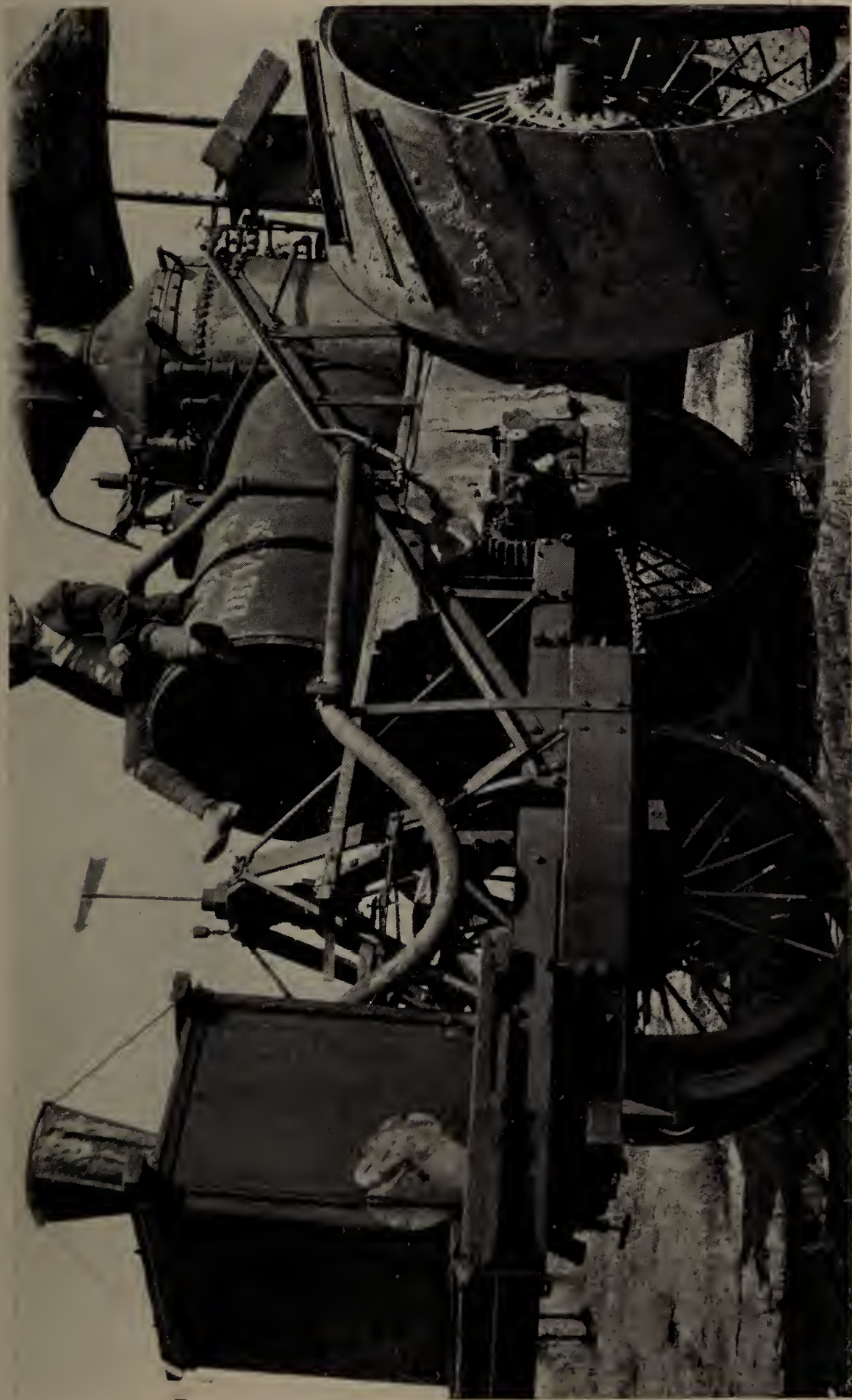
At eleven o'clock we have before us two rivers over which there are no road bridges, and which, owing to their breadth and violence, cannot be forded. So we must climb up to the railway track and use the iron bridges. It is a long and difficult task to push the heavy car up the slope, which is ten feet high and almost perpendicular. At 2.30, when we were congratulating ourselves over a difficulty conquered, we managed to fall into a frozen stream. The ice broke beneath our wheels and the car was glued in the mire. All our efforts to extricate it failed. Planks placed under the wheels broke, and our united strength was spent in vain against the tenacious resistance of the mud. Thus

the car remained, with its front wheels buried and the back wheels resting on the edge of the stream. We returned to Granger on a railway trolley. We had travelled eleven miles from the little village, dragging and pushing our machine all that distance. We had been fasting since the previous evening and were tired ; so it will easily be imagined in what a state we arrived at Granger. We were so tired and hungry that we scarcely had the strength to return. We preferred to leave the machine motionless by the riverside.

March 20.—We started at dawn in two great carts full of men and ropes and beams and poles. But we did not get very far, for if the horses were able to face the current of the first river, it was quite impossible for them to ford the second. So we had to return, discouraged. What shall we do, and how shall we liberate our Züst, if it is impossible to take it the aid of horses and men ? Shall we resign ourselves to leaving it there and thus finish the race and all our hopes ? The problem was solved without the least hesitation by the station-master at Granger. He solved it by ordering out an engine and three or four trucks loaded with Japanese labourers and railway men, with poles, beams, jacks, and chains. In a few minutes we had arrived and begun our work. Holding on to the ropes and chains, the 150 Japanese gave one pull and the car came out of the mud like a hand out of a glove. We could hardly believe our eyes. . . .

We continued our journey over mountains and valleys towards Evanston. We stopped half an hour at Church Buttes for lunch, then continued. Soon the country became more wild and fantastic, and it was night when we reached Spring Valley. It was an im-





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NEVADA: DERELICT TRACTION ENGINE IN THE DESERT.



portant town once, when it was supposed that coal mines were in the neighbourhood, and an hotel, theatre, and restaurants were built. There was also a railway station. But the mines were soon worked out, and the men have left to seek fortune elsewhere. We slept in the station, on the floor, our heads resting on cameras and our feet against the stove.

March 21.—We learned some terrible news this morning when we awoke. Beyond Spring Valley and before we reach Evanston, there rises Mount Wasatch, one of the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains. We must cross it in order to reach Ogden, unless we should choose the railway line, which runs through the big tunnel. The Thomas chose this easy method and passed through the tunnel; and yesterday we, too, had asked for a similar permission from the Union Pacific Railway Company. However, a telegram this morning informs us that the company is extremely sorry that it cannot accord us the favour, the fact being, as it says, that the Thomas, while passing, had damaged the track. It is evident that good reasons can always be found to justify a refusal; but this is really too much. The truth is that the Union Pacific is much pleased—American as it is—at being able to place obstacles in front of the wheels of a competing machine. No matter. We shall pass across the mountain, although the reports given by the railway employees in Spring Valley are very discouraging. There are nine feet of snow on the mountain and gradients of forty per cent, besides other tremendous obstacles.

We find a guide—our old guide left us at Spring Valley—who undertakes to get us through at any cost, and we start our journey. The ascent begins almost

immediately. The path is full of rocks and hills, which check the speed of the car. It is not straight, but winding and capricious, full of sharp bends which make the climbing still more difficult. Then the snow appears. At first there is little, but gradually it increases. Towards ten o'clock, about three miles from Spring Valley, the snow is four inches deep; at eleven o'clock it is a foot deep, and at twelve it is two feet. We have to get out our spades again and dig. At one o'clock it is nearly four feet deep on the strip of track, and it would be impossible for us to proceed if, fortunately, the road were not cut between two narrow cliffs on which the snow has accumulated in a lesser quantity. So, inclined almost on one side, we continue laboriously, stumbling at every step against stones or bushes hidden in the snow. At two o'clock we had travelled five miles and were at an elevation of 8000 feet. At three o'clock we have done five miles and our altitude is 9000 feet. The cold is terrible, although the sun is shining. By five o'clock we have reached the top of the pass, a height of 10,000 feet.

We stop for an instant beside an abandoned coal mine, whose dismantled engine is rusting in the wind. Then we begin the descent. The snow gradually diminishes. About three miles from the top of the pass it has disappeared completely and our wheels are navigating in a sort of swamp. At six o'clock we are 7000 feet above sea-level and the lights of Evanston shine in the distance. By nine o'clock we were in bed at Evanston, 6000 feet above sea-level. But it snows here.

March 22.—Ruland leaves us. An urgent telegram summoned him to New York, and he left this morning

by train. I accompanied him to the station. During this long journey, during these forty days in which we have shared together peril and fatigue, we have insensibly grown quite fond of each other, and the sudden parting leaves us with a sense of loneliness. As the train disappears, he shouts—

“Good luck! Good luck, boys! Remember me.”

Our journey to-day was a calm, rapid, reposeful one, without incident, at the end of which Ogden appeared. Behind the town glistened the great Salt Lake, enclosed in a collet of mountains like a superb sapphire in a ring.

## VI

### DESERTS OF GOLD

MARCH 23.—There were no banquets at Ogden and no festivities. The good Mormons concerned themselves little with our grotesque machine. In the country of the latter-day saints one does not acquire immortality by scurrying across the world on four wheels. Hence, on our arrival, the town was deserted and silent. Ogden is one of the few towns in the United States where there is no noise, and in which life does not flow noisily through the streets. The tram-cars do not hurry, nor do the houses shake beneath the vibration of the "Elevated." Nor do the men hustle through the streets; there is no need to hustle to reach God, especially when, as in the case of the Mormons, He is served with joy and gladness.

There is one strange phenomenon about Ogden which particularly strikes one who has traversed America and seen in all its various towns, despite their thousands of substantial differences, one unique and uniform characteristic—the desire for lucre. No American city is, so to speak, spontaneous; no town was born first as a hut, then becoming a house, next a group of houses, and finally a town; growing with the people who inhabited it, and having the same infancy and the same adolescence. American towns rise in a night and die in a day. But this is not the case with Ogden.



THE DESERT.





Ogden is a true city, whose industry is an instrument, not a cause, and whose smoke is an accessory, not a constituent element. It is serene and tranquil, a town built by its people in the midst of a desert of salt, built for their necessities and not for the purpose of a provisional refuge. It is this character which makes Ogden unique. One almost forgets that one is in America. Out of gratitude I gave myself the luxury, during the short afternoon that remained to us, of walking through the streets of Ogden. It is endowed with medium-sized houses, fine squares and gardens, broad streets, beautiful shops and monuments. The people work, naturally, because in America the only thing that does not work is the land; but they work easily and without effort. Time is not money in Ogden, and money is not the supreme happiness. The people are immune from that mad rush after dollars which urges their racial brothers. Philosophers rather than Americans, they are convinced that everything is relative, that the absolute does not exist. And they have founded an oasis in the desert.

I believe that Mormonism, besides being the discovery of an inspired impostor, is essentially the fruit of a violent reaction against the polarisation of pleasure, which Americans have introduced into their tastes and their habits. ✓ A theological doctrine like that of the Mormons, which has materialised the idea of Divinity, a theological doctrine which is entirely physical, epicurean, and joyful, must necessarily be a reaction against that species of puritanism, not religious but moral, which has turned the Americans into dollar-producing machines and dried up in them all the other springs of enjoyment which make existence supportable. ✓ Possibly

nothing of this was in the mind of Joe Smith; probably his embryonic idea was to offer to his original followers a simple religion which should not disturb their minds but appeal only to their senses. But it is certain that after the inevitable modification which every doctrine undergoes in the course of time, Mormonism has assumed a decidedly reactionary character. The Mormons have desired to enjoy to the full the pleasures of every sense; they have wished that their felicity should come, like the waters to the sea, from a thousand distant springs, and that their life should be full and complete, not stunted and unformed, not enormously developed in one sense and atrophied completely in another. They have embraced all joy in their catechism. They have taught their followers to offer garlands to Aphrodite and Dionysius, to Apollo and Pluto. They have taught that greatness consists in having enjoyed much and in having enjoyed without effort and without pain. All these reasons, perhaps, helped me to find the sun so lucid, the gardens so green, and the ladies so beautiful at Ogden.

I fell in love with Ogden at first sight, as soon as I reached it. But I detested it at night. All the hotels were full and we experienced enormous difficulty in finding a room. The hotels were full of widows. They were only widows in a manner of speaking, for it would be difficult to find anybody more cheerful than these ladies whose widowhood lasts only a few days. Ten or fifteen of them have the honour of dividing the attentions of one husband, whose duty it is, according to the law of the Mormon, to be just and impartial in the distribution of his patronage. Hence, the ladies belonging to one husband are widows



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REFRESHMENTS IN THE DESERT.



only for as many days as correspond with their number. At first they all lived in holy peace together under one common roof, and it was the husband who lived alone in a distant hotel. But now has come the terrible American law. Each husband must have only one wife. Consequently poor Anna, Maria, Elizabeth, and Louisa Young have had to seek refuge in separate quarters, and the immense seraglio where the good Mormon came to worship in joy and gladness no longer exists. And the ladies are called "widows."

. . . . .

Our preparations for departure occupied an immense time. Beyond the walls of Ogden the desert begins, and it must be approached with care. Hence the car was loaded with food, filled with water like a cistern, and we were given a guide who was blind of one eye, a tent, a quantity of ammunition, maps, and much advice. Judging by what we were told, the desert must be a fearsome place. We departed full of mixed emotions—pleasure at the prospect of adventure, and a little fear for the unknown that awaited us. The road was not exactly dreadful at first. There was a wide expanse of dry, yellow grass to the right, an enormous white salt marsh, scintillating under the sun, to the left, and in the distance the Great Salt Lake, shining like a polished shield.

To a village sixteen miles from Ogden, the three solitary "sportsmen" of the town had gone by train to await us and to record our time. They saluted us as we passed, waving their arms and watches in the air. When the echo of their voices was spent we remained truly alone.

The hours passed slowly and evenly over our heads and the miles flew behind our shoulders. The guide sitting beside me did not speak a word. He directed us with large, decided gestures. The only words which managed to jerk themselves out of his mouth were "All right," when the first fifty miles had been passed. The continuous, uniform motion sent me slowly to sleep.

We stopped at five o'clock. It appeared that the differential was making a noise which showed that something was wrong. Haaga raised all the boards from the bottom of the car and listened while Sirtori turned the wheels slowly. There was certainly a peculiar, inexplicable sound. So the differential had to be dismantled at all costs, and the operation could not be done in the open. We soon found a large farm near the edge of the lake, and we took the car into the empty courtyard. The doors of the tenantless stable were open, and flocks of sparrows flew in and out of the windows. The noise of our motor broke the idyllic silence. We wandered across the empty rooms of the house in search of somebody to whom we could make excuses for our intrusion. But we did not find a soul. There was a breakfast-room, neat and clean; a blue-papered bedroom, bathed in soft light; a little dark boudoir, on whose walls was a picture of a young lady; a kitchen shining like silver; but not a human soul. Everything seemed to be ready, as though a door might open at any moment, to give passage to the gentle mistress of the house. But nobody appeared. It seemed like a magic castle built in the midst of the desert.

We set to work in the courtyard, amidst the cows

and the sparrows. We cleared the car of its baggage, dismounted the coach-work, the change-speed gear, the petrol tank, and on reaching the differential found a nail stuck in the cogs. It was a fine fat nail, and it could not have found its way thither merely by mistake. It must have been placed there by some patriotic Yankee, who thus wished to ensure the victory of his own country. Fortunately we discovered it in time. Some wily personage must have entered the garage at Ogden during the night and inserted the nail, for there was no reason at all for opening the differential, and the nail was quite a new one. For the rest, it was not the first time that we had experienced similar acts of "sabotage." At Calmar, near Iowa, one morning, we found two of our tyres deflated. Two long nails had been stuck in them—in the sides, mark you, where the tyres did not come into contact with the earth.

To-day's discovery upset us a little, and we could not help reflecting on the predatory instincts which still find a home in the depths of the American soul, and are ready at any moment to explode violently. . . .

The rhythmic tread of a trotting horse was heard suddenly outside, causing us to raise our heads from our work. The wooden gate of the courtyard was opened, and, led by a tall, powerful-looking young man, a buggy entered, in which a lady was sitting. She was young, with a mass of golden hair and large brown eyes. It was the lady whose photograph I had seen smiling from the walls of the boudoir. They were undoubtedly the owners of the farm, but on seeing us they did not betray the least surprise. They regarded us with indifference, listened without paying excessive attention to the excuses which Sirtori made

for our invasion, replied with a friendly wave of the hand, then entered the house, leaving the door open. While the man was unharnessing and rubbing down the horses in the courtyard, we saw the lady, in a big apron and with her sleeves turned up, going and coming between the kitchen and the dining-room. The husband remained outside for a long time, always silent and impassive. He led the cows to their pasture, gave food to the chickens, and swept up the rubbish from the front of the house. Between one task and the other he would call his wife as she was passing, and she would come smiling on to the threshold. They would embrace each other quite calmly and without any embarrassment, as if we were miles away. At night he had finished his work, but we had not. We still had to replace the big petrol tank, solder the tube, and remount the body. It was too late to continue and there was no more light. We decided to rest and sleep, but where? The man appeared at the door and asked—

“Have you finished?”

“No.”

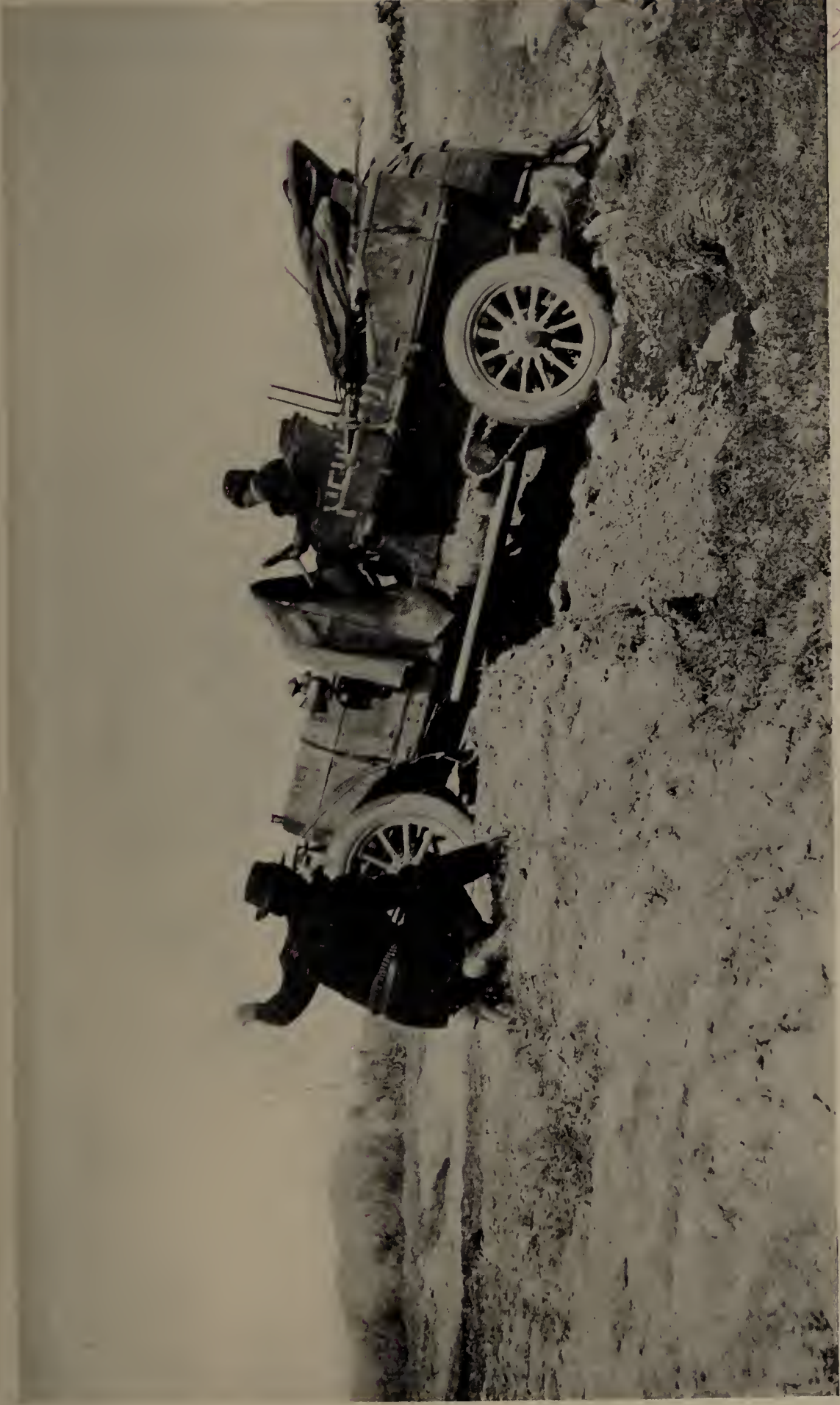
“Will you have some food?”

“Thank you very much; if you want . . .?”

“All right.”

We entered the dining-room, which was lighted by a big acetylene lamp. Plates had already been laid on the table for us. The lady came and went with her elastic, harmonious tread. In silence we ate plates of porridge and corned beef; the man did not speak and we did not speak. The lady did not sit down for an instant, but was constantly engaged in serving and putting things in order. Afterwards the man con-





OSTON  
1916  
C. H. BAKER

IN THE RED DESERT: JUMPING A BANK.



ducted us to the stable where we had to sleep. It was a wretched place, with a leaky roof, full of dirt, damp and cold. We passed there one of the worst nights of our journey; shivering with the cold, constantly pricked by the straw on which we lay, tormented by rats scurrying over our legs, and by the perpetual chirping of the sparrows.

March 24.—We arose at dawn and finished our work. Then we departed. *They* did not say a single word to us. They stood, the man and his wife, on the threshold of the house. They watched us depart without making a sign. The engine was started and the car passed out of the courtyard and on to the road. They were motionless and betrayed no surprise, no interest. . . . But who are *they*? What is the romance which they have come to hide in the desert?

The road was good for about fifty miles, across the same landscape—grassy plains to the right, salt marsh to the left, and the shining mirror of the lake in the distance. But it was full of ruts, irregular, narrow, and turning capriciously. However, we could get forward, and that was enough. For us a road is good or bad in so far as it is practicable or impracticable. But after fifty miles this one became bad, that is to say, absolutely impracticable. All traces of the path along which we had been advancing were lost in the grass. The earth was sodden with water filtering through its molecules, and though preserving the appearance of solidity, it gave way beneath our wheels. Hence we were obliged to clamber on to the old, melancholy track of an abandoned railway line. The ascent was easy, because the embankment was low, but the task of keeping ourselves on the track was extremely

difficult. The rain had washed all the ballast from between the sleepers. It was like driving across a ploughed field. In addition to this there was only a very small length of the sleepers outside the rails, and at every hundred or two hundred yards the wheels slipped off, the car inclined on its side, and we had to dismount and lift it back on the track.

All around us was the desert. The line itself was a scene of desolation. To anybody who has not experienced the infinite sadness of absolute solitude, a railway line across an immense plain is a thing of no significance; but for us it is everything. It is a living thing, a companion, a friend, something which leads us to the promised land. We are never alone so long as a railway track or telegraph poles stretch before us. But this line is dead. It is like a corpse, the molecules of which are returning to the earth. It is rusting away and becoming part of the wilderness. The grass has invaded it, the sleepers are green with moss, the signal-posts have fallen and the stations rotted away. The line is dead ;—suffocated by the desert.

Only one station remains standing—Kelton, where the line ends. It has a station-master—a sad, melancholy official, who despatches the little affairs of each day, and languishes from boredom and desperation in his exile. For sole companion he has a telegraph instrument which fills up his hours of leisure. It is true that he does not often have occasion to use it, but he would die without the familiar click. He is always at the apparatus, calling up officials and despatching to every distant machine news, greetings, or the time—anything, in fact, so long as it provides an excuse for tapping the key and feeling himself in touch with

another life. He never really has anything to say, but he is always calling, resorting to most puerile excuses and complicated subterfuges in order to get a reply. All the operators know this poor solitary. They know that he is alone in his station, like the guardian of a lighthouse, and are generous. They believe all his pretexts, respond to all his calls, and maintain conversations with him, so that the tap, tap of the sounder fills the little room with a gladsome sound.

Now and again there arrives at Kelton a train, consisting of an engine and two trucks which come empty and go as they came. Then there is an orgy of life and enjoyment. The driver brings the latest newspapers and gossip from Ogden, the stoker carries letters, and the guard brings stories about the theatres and festivals, about men, women, and things in Ogden. The exile listens with thirsty ears, drinking in all the little details because they will provide him with something to think about and dissect when he is alone. It is only at such times that the friendly little key is silent.

We also stop at Kelton. But not because it is late, not because we are tired, but on account of the car. The chassis had broken again, a little in advance of the place where it broke at Paxton, just beyond the strip of steel with which we had repaired it at Cheyenne. It was impossible to proceed a step further. Sirtori had a moment of desperation on seeing the damage. He wished to retire from the race, but Haaga and I encouraged him and persuaded him to remain. It would be grotesque to give up now, when the De Dion is far behind us and the Thomas only precedes us by three days. But at Kelton it is absolutely impossible to carry out the necessary repairs, and we are unable to move.

Sirtori interviewed the station-master, who replied that possibly a train might arrive to-morrow and that he would telegraph for a goods truck. So we remain at Kelton, and shall return perhaps to-morrow to Ogden. We are in a wretched hotel, which was flourishing at one time when the railway brought here its daily current of life, but it is now in a state of suspended animation.

March 25.—The train arrived at midday—a miniature train—which seemed almost afraid to run on so rotten a line. The company, however, had put on a splendid goods truck for the Züst, and everything went well. But not without some discomfort to ourselves, for in the sole passenger carriage, which was really a sort of cattle truck, we were shut up for about six hours and arrived at Ogden towards eleven o'clock at night. At the station a crowd of automobiles had come to tow their wounded sister to the garage. They arranged themselves in a long file, bound one to the other with ropes, and then proceeded along the silent streets. The few Italians who had come to meet us wept when they saw *their* machine reduced to such a state.

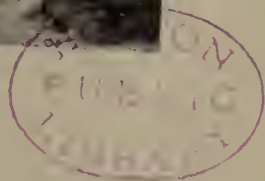
March 26.—Our repairs were finished at dawn and we departed. But not by the road, because we had to resume the race at Kelton, and we felt ourselves unable to cover again those wearisome eighty miles. As there are no trains for Kelton, we travelled along the Union Pacific Line, going as far as Montello and there turning back to Kelton to resume the race at the point where it had been interrupted. It was about eleven o'clock when we arrived at Montello and half an hour later we started towards Kelton. We reached there at



IN THE DESERT.



DESERT RAILWAY: A "LEVEL" CROSSING.







three o'clock in the morning and got the station-master to certify that we had returned to the precise spot at which we had given up the race two days before. At eight o'clock in the morning we passed Montello again, and proceeded.

This was a marvellous day, bathed with sun and fragrant with spring. The road, or rather a mere track across the grass straight ahead for three hundred miles, was level, smooth, and easy, such a road as we had not come across before. Hence we put on our best speed. We stopped twice, once in order to eat, sitting in a circle on the ground, and consuming our eternal corned beef and not less eternal sardines, the second time to get over a railway crossing. In the desert the railway has nothing which corresponds to the permanent way. The sleepers are simply laid on the ground, and the rails rest on the sleepers. Civilisation in its conquering march has had little time to waste in the refinements of railway construction; it has thrown down its strip of steel and passed on. What, however, does not pass on is the automobile. We have to make tremendous efforts and construct endless "approaching works" before we can get over the crossing. We must build a regular bridge from the level ground to the height of the rails and push the car over it. The task was neither an easy nor a short one, but it was the sole worry of the whole three hundred miles. It was the desert in the strictest sense of the word that we were crossing. There was not one house for the whole of the distance, not a house and not a man. The solitude was absolute. But the desert was not large and limitless, it was a strip, a slice of the desert enclosed between two walls of naked mountain.

At five o'clock we arrived at Ely. The town was silent and forsaken, because all the inhabitants were at work in the distant copper and silver mines. Ely is a strange town, not built of stone and iron, but of cloth and wood. It is a multitude of shapeless huts and tents rather than a town; a nocturnal encampment rather than a place of permanent dwelling. It appears to have been built for a night's shelter by people who had come in a caravan and had to leave in the morning. There are no houses, or very few, and on these the whitewash is still fresh. The people live in a sort of temporary shelter built of advertisement hoardings, pieces of cloth, and cardboard. There is an hotel, three bars, and a station. The town, such as it is, is at present in the incipient stage. It is a true American town in embryo.

Twelve months ago there was nothing here but a silent expanse, and coyotes wandered amidst the grass. Then came the first blow of the pick—and fortune. Now there are the germs of a town. Within three years there will be a large, grandiose city, with its Pantheon, Coliseum, elevated railway and subway—at least, if the copper and silver which are being so anxiously searched for are found. If within two or three years the veins of the earth should be dried up, its fate will be different. Then the desert will return to its domination, and the wind will fill with sand the trenches in which were laid the foundations of the town which was to eclipse Thebes with its houses and walls of gold.

March 27.—Like all paths which lead to happiness, the road to Goldfield, the city of gold and light of which the old, solitary inhabitants of the desert of



ROCKY MOUNTAINS: THE ROAD BEYOND ELY.



GOLD DIGGER'S CABIN.





Nevada tell such marvels, is long and difficult. It is fine and varied at first, at the gates of Ely, whence it creeps through a wide canyon across a green Alpine landscape. It becomes oppressive and insupportable when it descends from the mountain and stretches across a vast plateau in which it is swallowed up. But the desert of to-day is not that of the last two or three days, the green and high Youngla rustling with grass, not the desert of the Rocky Mountains dominated by wild rocks, not the desert of yesterday, flowery and fragrant; but the real, arid, naked desert of soft sand bathed in the sun, an interminable sterile plain in which not a single bird sings. Far away on the horizon it is shut in by two great chains of mountains. There is not a house, not a hut, not a trace of humanity—except the innumerable skeletons whitening on the sand.

The going, however, is anything but difficult. It is oppressive, but rapid and continuous. There are no ditches, no rugged ascents, no steep hills. It is one level track, upon which the car does not experience the least shock.

But above all it is very hot. It is the first time we have experienced this phenomenon since we started. It is not, however, the warmth to which we have been accustomed in our Southern climate, but a heat which is quite special, which causes no perspiration, but which suffocates. It is a most extraordinary warmth, which seems to be composed of light rather than heat, and to be reflected from the sand. The air is warm and sticky, as if it were fluid mud, and our hands seem to be encased by it in insupportably hot gloves. Stupefied by the sun and lulled by the

rhythmic motion, the mind wanders across the plain searching anxiously for a stone or a blade of grass to which it can attach itself. It arrives finally at the distant wall of mountains, then returns, begins to wander again, and is lost and overcome by the infinite solitude.

Meanwhile the desert, always level and smooth, is being traversed mile by mile. It is only broken here and there by little heaps of stone which mark the distances—the solitary labour of some traveller who has patiently counted the yards on his immense journey. By eight o'clock in the evening we have done 125 miles, more than half the distance between Ely and Goldfield, and we have strained the shaft against the stump of a tree which was rising unexpectedly from the ground. It is certainly not a disaster which will involve any considerable delay, but it will make us more prudent for the rest of the journey when we have to cross difficult countries where mechanical means are scarce. This explains why, at eight o'clock, when it was completely dark, we decided to stop. But where? Not in the open plain, because we should have to defend ourselves from the coyotes. We cannot remain in the car, because at Ogden we had changed the body and abolished the back seat, substituting for it a big petrol tank. There was not a house to be seen. Haaga and the guide walked on along a little path in search of a hut or some shelter where we could await the dawn. They followed the direction pointed out on a card written by hand and planted at the bifurcation of the road and path—

“To Troy three miles.”

Two hours later they returned, bringing joyful news.



A DESERT LUNCHEON.



SKELETONS IN THE RED DESERT.

ON  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY





There is a house three miles away with lights in the windows. But who knows whether they will put us up?

We started, following the guide, who walked ahead carrying an acetylene lamp. The path turned resolutely from our road and towards the mountain, flanking it for a moment, and then climbing in a steep ascent which the car could only manage with difficulty. Moreover, it was very narrow, and sometimes the wheels came perilously near the edge of a precipice, causing us at every moment new anxieties and new fears. Suddenly the path forsook the precipice and crept through a gorge, at the bottom of which shone a little house surrounded by a wire fence. Beside it was a white octagonal tent.

A dog barked on hearing the noise of our approach, and the door opened. There appeared a fine old man with a flowing beard, dressed in leather, and with a felt cap on his head. He regarded us with a look of astonishment. There was a note of diffidence in his voice when he asked us, half astonished, who we are, whence we come, and what we want. *Sotto voce*, while Sirtori was trying to disentangle the meaning of his English and making eloquent gestures, the man murmured—

“*Faut faire attention à ces types-là.*”

I caught the phrase and, cutting Sirtori short in a flowing and inextricable period, I hurried forward.

“*Vous parlez français?*”

“*Je suis français, monsieur. Et vous?*”

“*Italiens, italiens, mais c'est tout comme. . . . L'Italie, la France, c'est la même source, le même peuple. . . .*”

“*Bien, bien. . . . Mais qui êtes vous?*”

“*Des automobilistes.*”

“*Je vois. Et vous, vous baladez comme ça par ici, pour un motif quelconque, je suppose. Vous ne me ferez pas croire que vous avez choisies ces localités charmantes pour le plaisir de vos yeux seulement, n'est ce pas ?*”

“*Mon cher monsieur, vos soupçons seraient très offensants pour nous, si vous n'aviez pas raison de douter. Mais dans notre cas et dans notre position ils sont pleinement justifiés. Nous sommes, donc, des coureurs d'une grande course automobiliste autour du monde, dont la première partie du parcours comprend la traversée de l'Amérique, de New York à S. Francisco. Vous devez bien connaître, je pense . . . New York—Paris, la course du ‘Matin’ vous savez.*”

“*Je ne sais pas. Je ne lis pas des journaux. Je suis seul ici et je n'ai aucune communication avec la vie extérieure depuis trois ans. . . . Mais entrez, entrez donc.*”

He took us inside, to a large, well-lighted room. On the walls were bunches, wreaths, and garlands of paper flowers, red, blue, and violet—a magnificent spring blossoming on the naked walls in defiance of the sterility of nature outside the door. There was an iron bedstead in a corner, a glowing hearth, a table, some books, a bath tub, some strange-looking brass instruments under a glass cover, stools scattered over the room, some stones of various colours, and nothing more. At least, I forgot. In another corner was a large photograph of a lady with two little children beside her. Over all was an air of peace and tranquillity, of a serene, well-ordered life passed beneath the light of an oil lamp before an open book. There was one open upon the table—a volume of Tennyson.



A WELL IN THE DESERT (STONE CABIN).



STONE CABIN (RED DESERT).

FOUNTAIN  
LIBRARY



The grand old man towered amidst his household gods, and his herculean body seemed to increase in size on contact with the little delicate things among which he lived. He offered us stools, scarcely touching them with the tips of his fingers. He gave us the most extraordinary things to eat—a soup of tinned oysters, peas cooked in a mysterious gravy, and bananas, and he made us drink wine—good wine of France, old and strong like himself. Then, simply and calmly, sitting on the edge of the bed, he began to tell his story. He spoke without emphasis, without exaltation, in a smooth, slow voice, and with the expansive gestures of a prophet. The light of the lamp fell full on his face, giving to his rugged features the appearance of bronze. He told us of his beautiful country far away, of a poor but serene and happy life, of an adored wife and two fair-haired children, and then of a great longing that seized him. Toiling beside his wife and children in his distant home, he was seized with despair because he could not give to the objects of his affection everything they desired. The consciousness of his poverty, his incapacity, his uselessness, became a tormenting fever. With eager eyes he would read in the newspapers reports of an El Dorado somewhere across the sea, to the west, and day by day the idea was hammered into his head that he must leave, abandon everything, and then at some distant time return with his hands filled with gifts and happiness. . . . So he went, alone, leaving everybody. He arrived, suffered, but found nothing. He endured the pangs of hunger, perished with cold, wandered over sea and land in search of fortune, for thirty years without cessation. Spring and summer passed over his head and winter whitened

his hair. He heard nothing more of his wife and she heard nothing of him. He wandered across the wide world, continually seeking, probing in the earth, and questioning the rocks, to wrest from them the secret of happiness and pleasure which he would later on offer to his dear ones in his distant sun-kissed country. He travelled breathlessly on the track of fortune, from Alaska to the Transvaal, from Canada to Australia, with his pick, and bundle, and rifle, and a tin of corned beef. He slept in the holds of ships and under trees in the forests. He saw the sun of every land and the stars of every sky rise and tremble over his head; he lived his life beside the men of every race, amidst the most diverse things.

✓ But he never found fortune. ✓ Like the medieval alchemist who consumed his existence beside the furnace and alembic in a smoky laboratory searching for the philosopher's stone, so he had wasted himself in the quest of riches. He had squandered his life, cast it to the four winds. He had thrust far behind him all affection and all joy; cut every bond, and untied every knot which united him to humanity. And now, after thirty years, he is hopeless, weakened, and exhausted. His hopes of happiness have passed, his gilded porcelain dreams have been shattered, and he has fallen here with his wings broken and his members bruised, like a bird shot while in full flight. He will never see his country or his family again; he will never leave this spot. He has a little, solitary, unknown mine amidst these rocks, and he wishes to die beside it. He does not hope to get anything from it. He no longer believes in it, but he cannot tear himself away from the spot. Every morning he goes to probe its



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GOLD SEEKERS NEAR STONE CABIN (NEVADA).





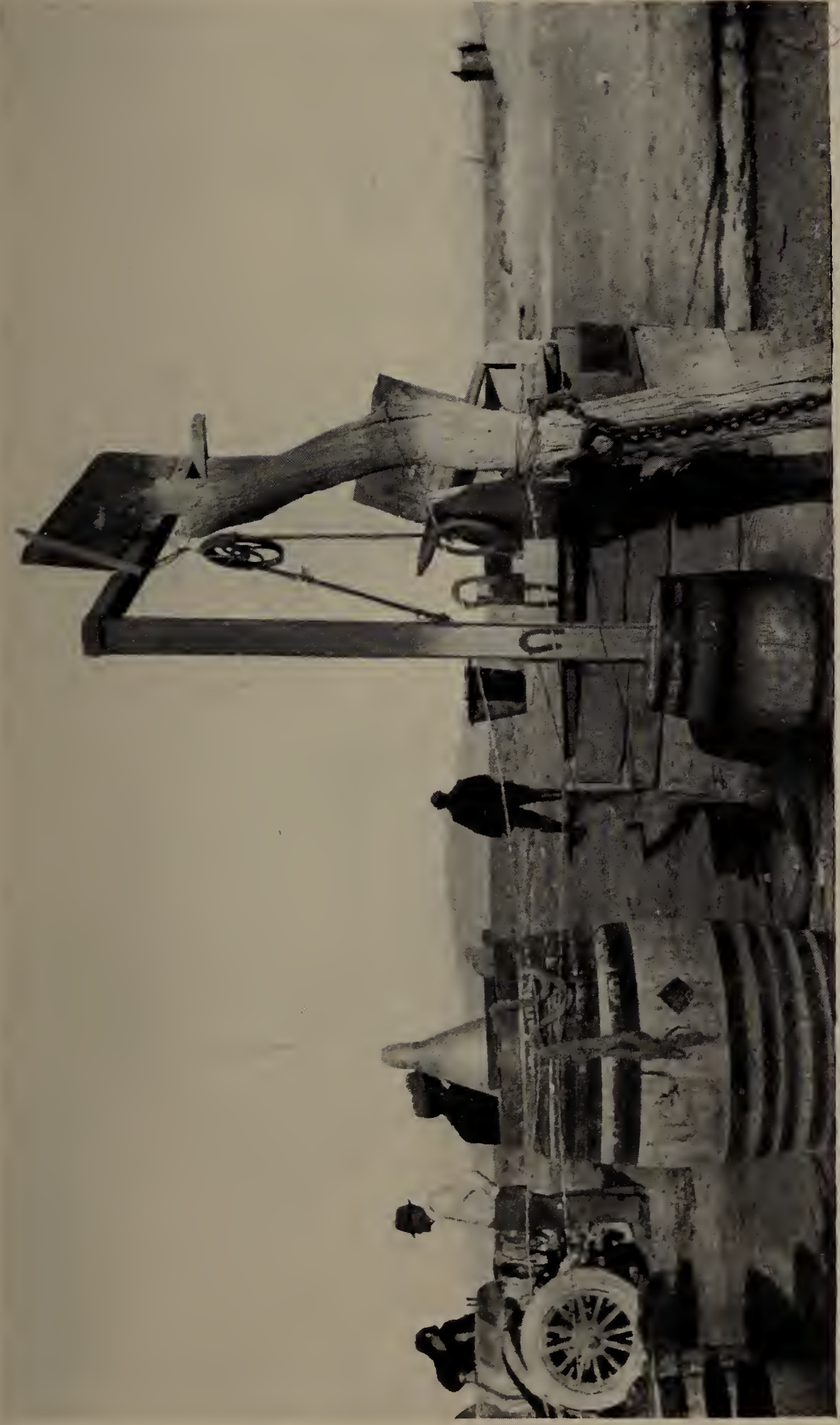
vitals with the same anxiety as thirty years ago. The gold fever still burns in his feeble veins. He will last until his eyelids are tired, and then he will stretch himself on his bed in the midst of his paper flowers and the smiling photographs, and will die, quietly, like a man who, having no more strength for climbing, allows himself to roll gently down an incline. He had one dream, and the dream is dead ; why should he continue to live ?

We listened intently to the painful story. His voice was so calm, even, and sweet, that he seemed to be speaking of another, not of himself. . . . At two o'clock we went to bed, stretching ourselves on some old skins.

March 28.—This morning the hermit accompanied us as far as the mouth of the gorge, and remained standing on the edge of a rock with his hands shading his eyes until we disappeared from sight. Our oppressive journey began again. But it was no longer the enormous vacuity of yesterday, the plateau without end and without obstacle. To-day there were plains enclosed by strange, irregular mountains, naked as the palm of the hand, mountains of iron. They are enormous blocks of iron, inaccessible rocks, placed one on the other, as though an army of giants had been throwing up defences. Their brown colour gives them a terrible aspect. At first they were isolated, but then became more frequent, forming groups and chains stretching across the plain towards the west. Under the colossal shade of one of these is Stone Cabin, a refuge for travellers. It is an old, broken-down house, which shelters a family of honest American speculators, a dog, and a servant—a redskin, a superb creature, who obstinately refused to pose before our cameras.

Further along the mountains of iron cease and those of gold begin. These are vulgar mountains, covered with earth and stones, on which some meagre shrubs pine away. They have no appearance of magnificence or grandeur, and the wealth which is contained in their bowels is not betrayed on the surface. They keep it hidden away, and clothe themselves as it were in the garb of poverty. They are jealous of their treasure, and guard it carefully against robbers. It is the guide who tells us about these immense storehouses in which repose all the wealth and grandeur of America, who estimates their worth in thousands and thousands of millions, and enables us to appreciate this cruel desert in terms of money. For otherwise we should not have thought that we were trampling under foot so much wealth, and at the end of our day's journey we should have had less respect for the dust which had accumulated on our wheels.

The greater part of these mountains of gold are not exploited; the hand of man has not yet driven a pick into them. Only on three or four of them have men come to set up mining works. And round the latter, naturally, towns have arisen, constructed in six months, flourishing in a year, grown to enormous and populous centres in three years. These towns are scattered at a great distance from each other, and are united only by a telegraph wire and the railway line. They are noisy, vivacious oases; not beautiful, certainly, nor diverting, but reposeful for one who comes from the east with his eyelids puffed and tongue swollen by the burning heat of the desert. They are accepted as resting-places which appear to be marvellous on the evening of our arrival, but which are horrible seen by daylight on the morning of our departure.



NEW YORK  
1871  
KIRKMAN

A WELL IN THE DESERT.



Tonopah, Troy, Goldfield, Rawhide—strange and fantastic are the names which these towns bear. They have been given casually by men drunken with sudden fortune. This faculty enjoyed by modern man of baptising a town at his caprice has a curious effect. In our land we are accustomed to trace names back from generation to generation across hundreds and thousands of years. We find the roots of our names hidden in the Greek characters; they come to us crusted with age and history. Here it is not so. Two men find a stone at the foot of a mountain and build huts around it, which they afterwards baptise. It will become a town in accordance with the well-known American genesis. It will increase, become colossal, but will always bear the nickname with which it pleased the first miners to salute their newly found riches.

Goldfield, where we stopped, greeted us with bands and banners and cheers. Naturally the town contains some Italians, as is always the case where there is a blow of the pick to be given and some wealth to be acquired. They prepared festivities for us. They offered us a banquet in one of the hotels of Goldfield, a marvellous hotel all built of marble, which must have been transported hither at great cost. I have rarely seen so much scintillating luxury, so much splendour and ostentation gathered together in the dining-room of a European hotel. Never have I seen so many diamonds and precious stones as were poured out from full hands on the bosoms and heads of the ladies, or on the rings of the men. It was a crude display, which ended by inspiring disgust.

March 29.—There were still more goldfields along the road this morning, immense fields shut in by mountains of gold. One is at last stunned and bewildered by all the gold, which is not seen, but felt intuitively, beneath the brown crust of the earth. Beyond Goldfield there are numerous other towns, all the same, surmounted by the wooden mining huts. They come to a sudden end and the desert of Moiaive begins. It is an ocean of yellowish sand which the wind has heaped in round hillocks, a fine sand in which are lighted flames which dazzle the eyes and into which we sink at every turn of the wheel. Over it all the sun pours down a torrent of fire that burns the air, and makes our car glow. It seems to enclose our heads in a burning ring. Against the wall of reddish mountains which shut in the plain strange mirages are produced of fairy towns, strong castles, and large expanses of water, which have no existence except in our diseased eyes. The heat is so great that gradually we remove our clothing and drive across the desert in our shirts and vests. There is only one water station in the desert, beside which are two hermits in a white tent, who make all travellers pay toll. They know that all those who are lost or wandering in the desert will come to their well, which is opened in the sand. They know that thirst and heat will cause every trail to finish here; that towards this spot will tend all desires, all hopes. So they established themselves here to sell water at a price. The well is a primitive wooden structure with old creaking pulleys, surrounded by a barrier of wood and barbed wire. Two or three barrels, whitened by the sun and filled with stagnant water, complete the landscape. In the midst of the encampment rises a



MOIAVE : AMERICAN JUNGLE.



GOLD SEEKERS' ENCAMPMENT ON THE THRESHOLD OF DEATH VALLEY.

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large wooden tablet, on which is painted with blacking:—

A barrel	.	60	cents.
A bottle	.	10	„
A glass	.	5	„

And it is a barrel, a bottle, or a glass of water that is measured out with the utmost accuracy as if it were nectar.

But there is not only a water station in the desert, for further along, after a very short journey, a verdant oasis begins, in the midst of which is the town of Greenwater, naturally beside a mine.

Greenwater is dead. It has been dead for six or eight months; I do not know exactly how long. As at Ely and as at Goldfield, men hastened hither from every part of the world at the first blow of a hammer striking gold from the rocks. They founded a town, they constructed a railway line, and the town began to live. But they grew tired and departed. The earth was deaf and its veins dry. So why remain? In three days they all left, abandoning their houses, shops, the town, and the mine. They took nothing with them on resuming their pilgrimage across the golden desert, so as not to be encumbered during the journey. Thus the town has remained intact as though the inhabitants had gone away in the morning and would return in the evening. The doors and the windows are closed; but through the panes one can see beds ready, kitchens shining with brass utensils, clothes still hanging on the pegs. In a bar is a whole array of vari-coloured bottles, disposed in order along the shelves. A printing office displays behind its windows a row of

linotypes, and on the walls are still affixed the announcements of a production at a local theatre—"Madama Butterfly," sung by an Italian tenor. There only remain seven people at Greenwater, who during the months of labour had found in the bottom of their hearts something which was not merely a desire for gain. They had grown to love the home more than the mine, and when the mine no longer responded they remained here. There are seven of them, six men and a woman, the latter an invalid. They belong to different families and live apart, but they meet in the house of the eldest in the evening for dinner. Necessity has bound them to each other and destroyed in them the thirst for gold, and made them brothers rather than friends. They have constructed a little social republic, putting all their riches into a common stock, and electing the eldest to rule over them and administer the State. Thus they live, like shipwrecked mariners in a desert island, recalling the glories of the mummified town around them, and re-reading the old numbers of the newspapers.

"This evening at the National Theatre, 'Madama Butterfly' . . ."

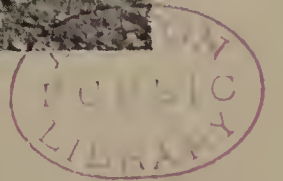
Greenwater concludes the analysis of the American town. We have seen the germination at Ely; the flowering at Goldfield; the rotting away at Greenwater. Thus, depicted on the desert in three great strokes, is the whole of American psychology. The story of the soul of the people is always written on the walls of its homes, and a people which has no homes and which does not live in them is certainly a people which has no soul.



DEATH VALLEY.



DESCENT INTO DEATH VALLEY.





## VII

### THE GARDEN OF ALCINA

MARCH 30.—A terrible, atrocious journey was the one which awaited us to-day, judging by what we were told at Greenwater. We had to cross a wide desert of borax, the Death Valley. This fearful well opened in the midst of the desert, to which, like streams to a river, all the roads insensibly lead, is the terror of all seekers after gold. One enters it unconsciously because its approaches are carpeted with flowers. It is so large and intricate that one may not get away from it without having risked death by heat and thirst. It is said that enormous treasures are buried there, that an extraordinary quantity of gold-dust is mingled with the burning sand, and that hundreds of men have left in times gone by to seek it. It is added that few of them returned and that their skeletons are now whitening amidst the gold-dust.

It was late in the morning when we arrived at Death Valley, after a series of green and reposeful stages. We descended thither by a series of steep and perilous descents from the mountains which, from their peculiar construction, resembled colossal Gothic churches or great castles. But the inclines were short. They each led to a small plateau at the edge of which there opened another descent giving access to yet one more

plain. Thus we descended step by step towards the bottom, and as we proceeded lower and lower the descent became always steeper and more dangerous. The heat also sensibly increased. After an hour's journey we were 1500 feet above the level of the sea. After two hours we were 600 feet below. And the heat became atrocious, insupportable.

But then the descent ends abruptly. The mountains recede towards the south and towards the north, and before us opens a dazzling white plain, without the least patch of brown shade to break for a moment the motionless surface. The sun's rays, which fall almost vertically from the sky, heat the boracic sand of which the ground consists and are refracted to our eyes from millions of minute crystals. The sun appears to be suspended low in the heavens and has a pale and sickly light. A thin, warm vapour surrounds it and circulates through the atmosphere.

Our journey becomes terrible. At the first turn our wheels are buried in the very fine sand and the car's progress is arrested. The ground gives way beneath our weight like water, and it is most difficult to advance because the wheels, besides sinking in, also slip round on the sand without taking hold. To assist the car we tear up two or three old tents into strips about the width of the tires and throw them under the wheels. This gives them a grip, and we get forward. Haaga goes ahead, laying down the strips of canvas and I follow, picking them up when the Züst has passed. Sirtori steers.

The heat is terrific. It has gone on increasing as we descended, and at the bottom of the valley has become torrid. It is not air that is around us, but something

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ROCKY MOUNTAINS: NEARING DEATH VALLEY.





almost solid, which adapts itself to our bodies as we advance like a heavy garment, covers our faces like a soft, warm mask, and presses on our heads. As we breathe flames seem to pass into our mouths and sparks enter our eyes. But above all the light, which turns this infernal place into an immense burning reflector, and against which the smoked glasses with which we are provided are no use, is an insupportable torment. The eye cannot bear it, and the whole body, as it were, is bathed in it.

By two o'clock we have covered two miles—two miles in three and a half hours! We are already done up. It is not the fatigue, nor the work, but the heat which deprives us of all strength. It is especially the want of shade which oppresses and tires us, the utter absence of a leaf, a straw, or a stone which would make a dark stain on the ground. It exasperates at first, but ends by exhausting. After exhaustion comes thirst, the atrocious thirst which tears at our throats with red-hot fingers, causing the tongue to swell against the burning palate and introducing into our veins a subtle fever. We have a leather bottle for quenching our thirst and a reserve of water in the tank. The burning in our throats is continuous, and we are perpetually drinking with tremendous avidity. At three o'clock, tired and hungry, we stop in the midst of the plain. Seated in a circle on the burning sand, we eat some of the eternal corned beef and tinned fish. The empty tins immediately turn black under the sun.

When we had finished our repast we stretched ourselves for an instant under the shade of the car. But the air was too ardent.

We resumed our march with our heads swollen like

enormous balloons and legs as limp as rags. We work now automatically, without thought or idea. Through our fevered brain there rushes a furious succession of restful visions—green shades amongst leafy trees; brooks babbling amongst willows and poplars across a meadow; the roar of a torrent falling over rocks to a valley; the plashing of a fountain in its basin under a portico. In all our thoughts there is mingled the rustling of the wind amidst the leaves and the murmur of water over pebbles. It becomes a veritable inferno. It seems as if the whole plain were flaming, burning like an immense pyre. We breathe in fire and a vestment of fire hangs on our limbs; our foreheads are bound by a circle of fire. A yellowish vapour surrounds the sun, hiding it in a thin cloud. It seems to have descended still lower and is still more pale and livid. In the distance, near the horizon, the Fata Morgana constructs and destroys towns and castles and spreads before our eyes immense shining lakes. . . .

At four o'clock we find three human skeletons. They were quite close together, about six or seven yards apart. The bones are as white as snow, calcined by the sun.

Not a puff of wind blows, not an inch of shade is to be seen on the ground, except our own shadows—dark circles which do not extend beyond our feet. There is not a black spot in the midst of all this shining sand, which resembles pulverised glass. We proceed through the insupportable atmosphere without breathing and without thinking, perfectly exhausted. We know only that this torment must finish, and we long for it to end. The sun declines at six and the torment ceases. We issue from the infernal valley after having crossed its

whole width and reach the other wall of mountains. The ascent begins at once, but it is an easy, delicious ascent, amidst green plants, rocks clothed with furze, and grassy slopes. It is paradise, rest, shade, after that fiery martyrdom. We stopped at a fountain of water gushing from a hollow in the rock in the shade of two colossal chestnut trees. The leaves quivered in the light breeze. We stopped to drink and enjoy that delight. Then we went on, and halted at Dagget at midnight.

March 31.—Behold the Land of Promise! It came to meet us this morning across the mountains with arms full of flowers, opening to our view the sweetest, greenest, most fertile landscape that ever delighted the human eye. The desert came to an end, cut off clean by a wave of trees and leaves which advanced from Los Angeles towards San Bernardino, into which the road plunged like a thirsty man into a spring of fresh water. The road winds through woods of acacia and jasmine, between high cypresses and hawthorn, which the spring has whitened with a myriad of stars. Sometimes the road is submerged by the wave of green, but it appears further on, where the plants and the grass give way to it. In the distance rises the Sierra Nevada, the last range of mountains which separates us from the sea.

Oh, the infinite joy of this garden which has suddenly opened its gates to us! What mad, puerile pleasure was ours this morning when we began to inspire the perfumed breath of prodigal nature! How we sighed with relief at seeing all these flowers! Our torment and anguish are over; the blinding sun, the sand, the infernal valley, are all far away. After fifty days of torture we have found once more the scenes and the

life which are dear to our eyes. We breathe the perfume of our own houses and our own country. This is our own perfumed land, the remembrance of which had been dimmed by the mortal sadness of the country through which we have passed. We breathed this morning with full lungs, and drank in pleasure with every sense.

The descent continued along a calm, reposeful road as far as San Bernardino—the soft city of the south sleeping behind closed shutters in the midday heat and in shady, fragrant gardens of palm trees and gloxinias. Towards Los Angeles the road becomes straight, wide, and hard, passing between the colossal arms of two lines of trees which meet over our heads. The motor travels along this unaccustomed track almost without noise, with a gentle hiss of the gear which becomes more acute as the speed increases. The wheels glide without a shock, scarcely pressing upon the tyres. And around us, carried in the same whirl as the trees and telegraph posts, pass little red and blue Californian houses buried beneath the gloxinias which have invaded the walls and the windows and penetrated everywhere, carrying with them the glory of their fragrant berries. From immense fields in which the orange trees are all in flower, waves of perfume come to us which give to the brain a sense of slight intoxication.

It is an orgy of luxury and flowers, a riot of vivid blooms, in the midst of which the houses with their carved peristyles and bizarre architecture are completely buried. It is the revenge of the plants which have been chased across the hostile land for more than four thousand miles; it is the victory of the flowers which have passed over the desert and the mountains, and

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THE BORACIC PLAIN.



have chosen for their kingdom this strip of warm earth, and installed themselves here as sovereigns. We passed through it as in a dream, a prey to the same strange excitement as seized us this morning. All this green, these fields which cannot contain their crops and whose perfume overflows into the road, this breath of warm air which seems to have passed through myrrh and cinnamon, evoke memories of our own dear country, the little Saracenic towns of Sicily, the Sorrentine villages buried between orange groves and the sea, the sandy shores of Abruzzo, the proud glories of Venice. All the marvels of our country return to us as by enchantment on this warm day. It is not America, cold, cruel America of which our bodies still feel the wounds; this is Italy, fragrant, flowery Italy, our dream and our desire.

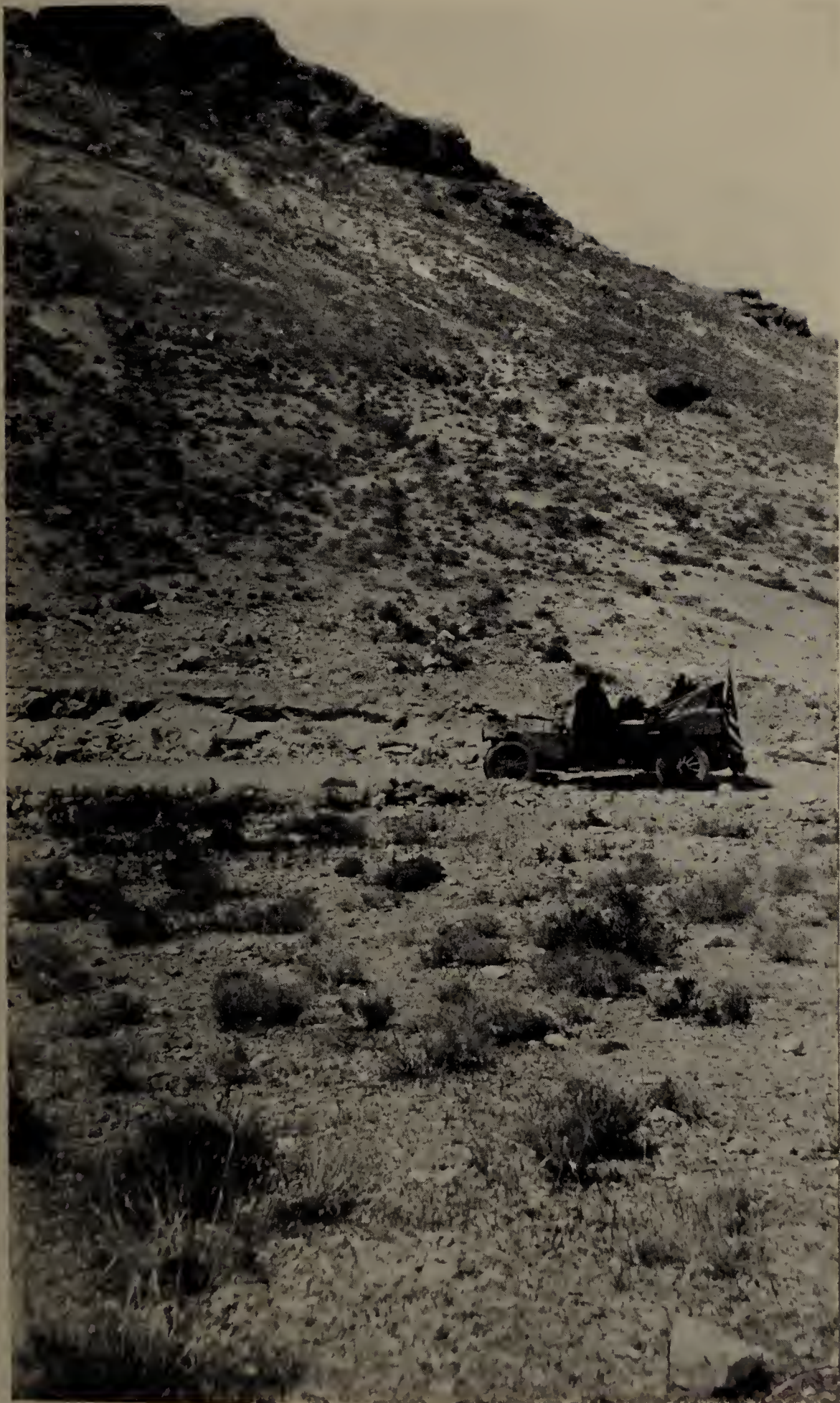
At Pomona Valley we are met by a tumultuous throng of automobiles, motor-bicycles, and bicycles, which follow and precede us. They carry no banners and no ribbons, but flowers, flowers in bunches, in handfuls, cut down without pity and without remorse; flowers which die suffocated by the dust and the vapour of petrol. It is a hecatomb of magnificent flowers sacrificed to do us honour.

We passed through two or three more towns hidden in orange groves, and then, a little before Los Angeles, Pasadena appears, buried amidst palms and agaves. They wish to offer us refreshments and to make a few speeches. We willingly accept. But what we were unable at any cost to repel was the brutal and violent invasion of a man badly dressed, chewing tobacco, and with dirty finger-nails, who jumped victoriously on the step of the Züst, overcame the fists and the Teutonic

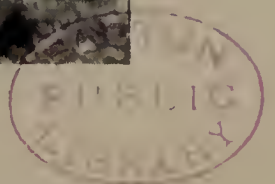
curse of Haaga, mounted serenely and installed himself behind us on a pyramid of baggage. He has a pencil and a fluttering necktie; he is a journalist—at least, he says so, adding that he is a reporter of the greatest newspaper in Los Angeles, which has a million readers, etc.

This illustrious but greasy personage has come to interview us with regard to our terrifying adventure in Spring Valley, in which, so he tells us, we were surrounded by an innumerable pack of wolves. We opened in the midst of them, so we are told, a sanguinary passage by means of our rifles, and did sundry acts of heroism. By this heroism, we are given to understand, we could have gained 210 dollars, the reward placed upon the heads of twenty-one of our assailants whom we brought to earth. He relates this fantastic story with a perfectly serene, irresponsible air, and although I endeavour to persuade him that it is a stupid fable, that the most ferocious animal we had seen and killed was a rabbit, and that in Spring Valley the only victim of our guns was an innocent sparrow which was airing itself on a telegraph pole, the good man pats me familiarly on the back, opens his mouth in a jaw-breaking laugh, and confides to me with extraordinary assurance that he knows perfectly well that it is romance; but it is precisely for this reason he intends that I shall tell him the story. "In America," he adds, "we are indulgent with visitors, as we are with women; provided they say they love us, we do not ask them if they tell the truth." Having uttered this last aphorism, he grins complacently and dismounts just as the first houses of Los Angeles appear, and there opens before us an immense avenue filled with





MOUNTAINS OF GOLD.





people. There are endless cheers, a tremendous crowd, bunches of flowers, greetings, and a banquet. . . .

The great newspaper "with a million readers" came out three hours later during the banquet. The front page was black with headlines. "Scarfoglio's terrifying story—Hand-to-hand battle—Sirtori strangles a wolf with two fingers—Teeth versus carbine—Good German blood—The last trench—Slaughter." There followed eight columns of wild prose meandering amidst a dozen blood-curdling illustrations, amongst which the most prominent is a picture of the journalist seated on our car. The wretch had come for this! On the second page is another flood of headlines and illustrations, and another tale begins. "One day, towards sunset, the Züst was straining along a steep slope of the Rocky Mountains. Dark night hung over the crests of the hills ready to fall on the daring automobilists. And on the dim line of the horizon a great cloud of dust arose in spiral waves like the tail of an irritated serpent. That dust, readers, was not dust; that cloud was not a cloud; those spirals were bisons, terrible ferocious bisons. . . ."

It is well that the reader should know, for the tranquillity of his own conscience and of ours, that there are only half a dozen bisons in America, that they are shut up in a great cage in Yellowstone Park, and that they all say "Papa" and "Mamma."

. . . . .

We left Los Angeles the same evening for San Francisco, the last stage of our journey across this harsh America. Los Angeles is too sweet and restful to permit us to tarry there long without

danger. We leave at once, so that the desire for repose may not overcome us little by little, as it has overcome the Americans who live there. They have all more or less been great workers, great money-makers in their time, untiring and untirable. Then, one day, lassitude and the need for rest on soft grass under a tree, and beside a fountain, seized them. So they came here, to this garden of Alcina, to restore their tired muscles and to give some oxygen to their lungs, which were saturated with carbon. They have erected this city here for their rest and pleasure, and imprinted on its broad green avenues and wide streets the character of a city of peace and truce, a city in which noise, anxiety, and tumult cease, and in which the only law is that of beauty and pleasure.

Two automobiles accompanied us beyond Los Angeles for a good stretch along a magnificent Californian road. Then they bade us adieu and returned. We continued our journey alongside the fantastic oil wells with their thousand panting pumps. It was a calm, regular, tranquil journey through forests and orange groves until the dawn.

April 1.—The sea! It appeared suddenly this morning, calm and motionless, across a break in the mountains at the top of a long ascent, which the flowers, growing on every part and along the sides of the mountains, converted into a covered corridor. Some islands, bluer than the sea itself, seem like enormous floating galleys. We regard it with an intense affection. It is the Pacific Ocean; the sea, which we have reached after fifty-two days of hard toil across five thousand arduous miles, through valleys, deserts, snow fields, up steep mountains and

down precipitous declines. A continent is behind us, a hard, bitter continent; and there are still two others which we have to cross. What we have already accomplished is little in comparison with what still awaits us. But no matter, the first enemy has been overcome and the first battle won. For the present, standing on the seats of the car, we have saluted the sea with the same emotion, the same tenderness with which, climbing into the rigging, the sailors of Christopher Columbus must have saluted the land of Spain when it appeared on the horizon one May morning.

Very capricious is the road which leads to Santa Barbara and San Francisco. It is unrolled like an immense ribbon alongside the sea for miles and miles, following the same line of gulf and cape and promontory. Sometimes it is lapped by the waves, which deposit on it a layer of fragrant seaweed, sometimes it suddenly withdraws like a vexed lover, to join the sea again in a little while and caress it anew. It is called *El Camino Real*, the name which was given to it by the Spaniards on account of its regal beauty. And I am quite unable to imagine anything more grandiose and splendid than this marvellous road. It is flanked by numerous towns, lost in a wealth of flowers—*Los Olivos*, *Ventura*, *Santa Clara*, through which we pass as quickly as possible so as not to yield to the desire—so delicious are they—to put on our brakes and dismount beside one of these gardens, near one of these white-robed women who send us smiles and kisses on the tips of their fingers, and to finish here our race and our lives. . . . We stopped at Santa Barbara for a couple of hours only, in order to repair the carburettor, and departed as twilight was descending.

April 3.—We have travelled very little during the last two days ; very little and very badly. The motor is tired after the efforts of the last two months. We have not been able to repair the shaft which was bent in the desert of Nevada just after leaving Ely, and the chassis, which was summarily repaired twice, at Cheyenne and Ogden, has broken again. The car has suffered everything—in the desert, in the mountains, and in Death Valley. The springs, the chains, the engine, the gear, the coach-work, nothing is right, and the engine only works by a miracle which is renewed every day by Haaga, who works through the night, making such repairs as are in his power. But what is really taking the heart out of us, what has made us limp and indifferent, is not all this ; not the road, and not the state of the car ; but the fact that the competitor on whose heels we have been hurrying, the Thomas, has already arrived, by train or on its own wheels, at San Francisco. It did not come to Los Angeles. Against all the regulations for the race, it cut across the desert and thus saved itself six hundred miles. It has made half the journey on the railway line and in railway trucks ; it has avoided the Rocky Mountains by passing through the tunnels instead of over the mountain-tops, as we did. It has changed its engine four times and its driver four times. It has been hauled by horses and by electric trams. But it has arrived, and that suffices. It will not, perhaps, suffice to establish its victory in its first part of the journey, because the Americans themselves recognise that our achievement has been the better and the more regular ; but it is certainly sufficient to cool our enthusiasm and quench our ardour. The



ROAD IN CALIFORNIA: A SIESTA.



CALIFORNIA: SANTA BARBARA HILL.

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Thomas was the red flag waved in front of our eyes to infuriate us. It having disappeared, our incentive also disappears. The De Dion does not count. It is five days behind us, and it will never be able to catch us up. The others are so far behind, at Ogden, at Cheyenne, that we do not even think of them.

To-day we stopped at San Luis Obispo for a repair to the petrol tube and left there late, towards nightfall. Two Italians had come to advise us that the advance guard of the Italian colony at San Francisco was coming to meet us. We met them a little after midnight at Ramsey, when we least expected them. They had stopped with their two cars before an hotel, tired by the protracted journey. Suddenly they heard a rhythmic noise, the sonorous respiration of a tired car coming through a remote gorge. They no longer expected us and no longer believed that we should be travelling by night. But they stretched their ears with the curiosity of every motorist who hears the noise of a car behind him. And when, over the top of a steep ascent, the white rays of our lamps appeared and our car advanced through the night, an agitated voice asked—

“Züst?—Italy?”

“Yes, yes; Züst! Züst and Italy!”

They threw themselves towards us with open arms and eyes filled with tears.

“We are Italians . . . Italians of San Francisco.”

So we stopped at Ramsey in the little solitary inn where our compatriots had met us and where our hands touched. The inn was so small that we had to sleep three in a bed.

April 4.—We left at daybreak preceded by the two cars as far as Gilroy and San José, where another sixty

automobiles awaited us to escort us as far as San Francisco. All along the road we were sniped at by neurotic, contradictory telephone messages which accumulated instructions upon instructions and orders upon orders. Poor Signor Pedrini, of the Italian Touring Club of San Francisco, who had come to meet us with Signor Patrizzi, editor of the newspaper *L'Italia*, ended by completely losing his head. He no longer knew what instructions to follow or what orders to give. He could not form any decision, but remained all through the journey suspended, so to speak, between the wire of the telephone and the steps of the automobile. The Italians at San José were impatient. They had been expecting us for fifty days and for fifty days they had suffered anxiety. They wished to see us, to embrace us, to tell us with their own voices all about their anxiety and anguish and their affection. For two months they had loved us like their own children, and for two months they had repressed all this tenderness. So the telephone messages followed one upon the other, order succeeded order, and we travelled in the midst of a continual jingle of telephone bells.

We turned into the square of Gilroy, where some cars, more impatient than the others, had come to meet us, and passed quickly before them. They had not even the strength to cheer immediately, owing to their excitement, and it was only when the car stopped that their enthusiasm exploded. After we had received a tribute of flowers and tears of joy we were soon on the road again in procession. One car preceded us and the rest followed. The procession was already long and noisy, but as we proceeded along the

road which skirts the mountain, at every hundred or five hundred yards another car appeared, waited for us to pass, made its offering of kisses, smiles, and flowers, and then attached itself to the end of the procession. A good way before San José there was a group of about three score. They were unable to remain in the town any longer, but wished to meet us on the road at the earliest possible moment. Even the Italian Consul at San Francisco came to offer us the bread and salt of hospitable welcome.

But our progress was slow. Every house involved a halt, every window was a stopping-place. From every field of roses on the way came warm, hearty, sonorous greetings. Men shouted, women threw us kisses, children waved their caps. "*Erviva! Erviva!*" The procession behind us was broken up and became a disorderly tumult, each car, with its fluttering banners and excited occupants, trying to surpass the rest. Gradually, as we approach San José, our speed increases. From head to tail of the noisy serpent behind us the excitement passes like a current of electricity through a wire. The cars all increase their speed and advance in an infernal saraband. Everything disappears beneath a thick cloud of dust. Of those who precede us and of those who follow we can see nothing. We drive along with our throats choked in dust and our arms loaded with flowers.

Suddenly an enormous black patch appears which divides itself into two lines of people between some houses. Amidst a wave of acclamation we stop at San José. Then there is a banquet, flowers, speeches, cheers, an old lady who weeps . . . and a quiet room in an hotel.

April 5.—I really know nothing of our entry into San Francisco. Seated before this table in this calm, silent room, I try in vain to seize the fragments of tattered recollections which pass through my brain, and to analyse my emotions. Emotions? No; one emotion only, a dream, a delirium of thirty thousand heads in the broad streets, of an uninterrupted shout, of balconies and roofs crowded with people, of an immense tide of humanity in which tram-cars were stranded, of an enormous, incomprehensible clamour, and of mountains of fragrant flowers. One other thing I recall. Before my memory suffered shipwreck I had in my hand letters from home, from my own people far away, and my eyes were filled with tears.

. . . . .

April 13.—Three days ago we left San Francisco for Seattle, on the steamer *City of Puebla*, and we arrived to-day. We should have embarked on the *Humboldt*, which is leaving for Valdez, in Alaska, but in one of the wretched barracks of Seattle, which is called the Hotel Butler, we found an extraordinary telegram from the Züst firm, ordering us to abandon the idea of crossing Alaska and to embark instead on the steamer *Aki-Maru*, which leaves this evening for Yokohama. The Thomas is returning hurriedly from Alaska, because it found itself confronted by a thaw. . . .

Thus ends the daring dream of our adventure. We were made to start too late from New York; we were compelled to remain too long in America. Our glacial adventure finishes sadly with the ice and with this spring which has at last broken down every barrier and is now singing in all the gardens. We shall not enter



READY TO EMBARK FOR ALASKA.

Y. T. M. P. L. I. C. L. I. B. R. A. R. Y.



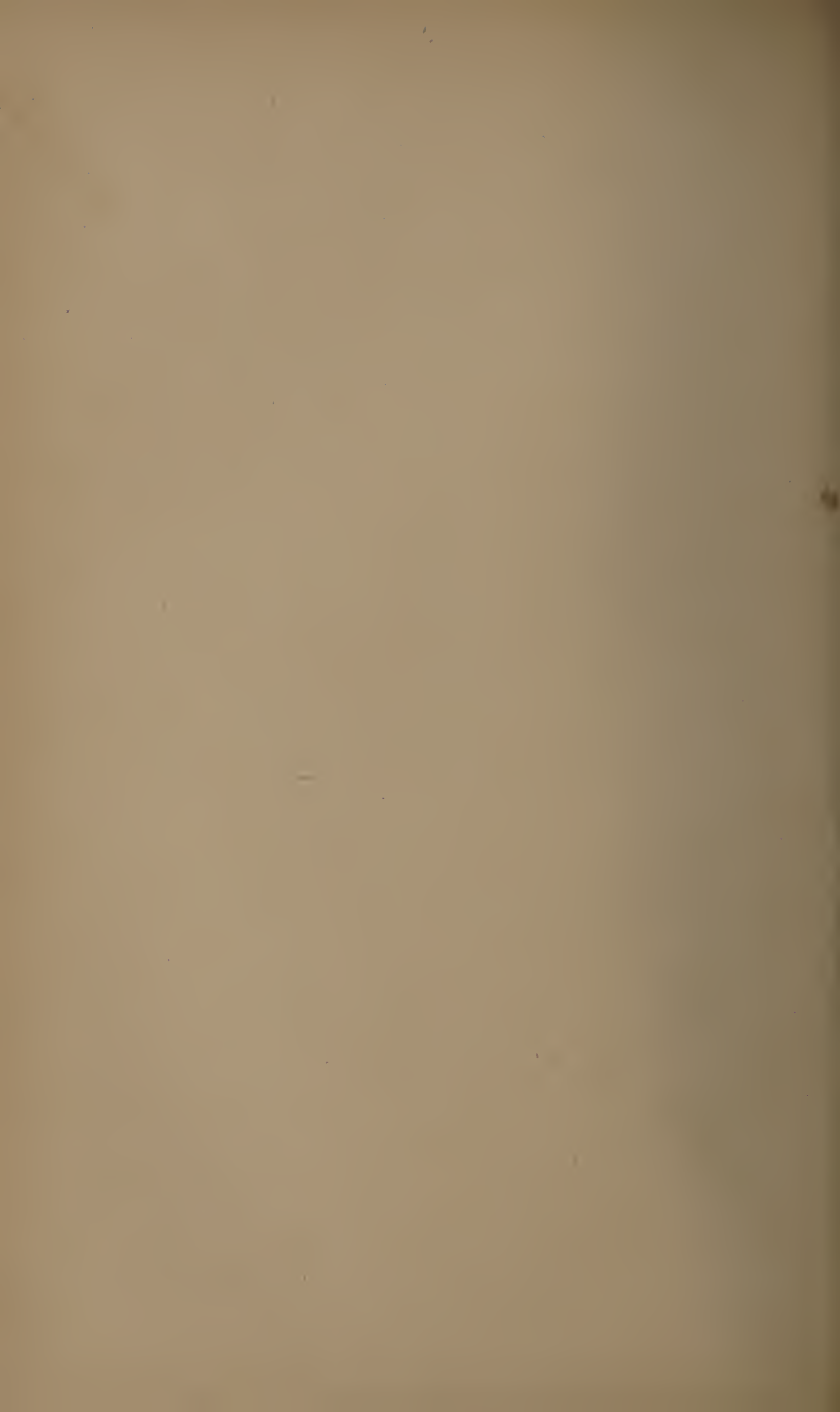
Alaska. We shall traverse other harsh and difficult regions, face other arduous tasks and new dangers. But all this will be of no avail, for we shall not have attempted the virgin tracks of the Behring route. . . .

We are told that we should not have got beyond the Behring Strait, and that we should hardly have been the narrators of our adventure. That would matter little. We had set out to perpetrate an act of splendid folly, not to open up a new way for men. We wished to be madmen, not pioneers. And we are disappointed of our madness. Now neither Japan with its almond blossoms nor the burning Manchurian summer will repay us for all that to which we are saying good-bye. So high and shining was the mark which we had set before us, that the new road can afford no compensation for its loss. But the *Aki-Maru* is ready to weigh anchor and regret is useless. Our dream is dispelled. . . .





II  
ASIA



## CHAPTER I

43° 53' N. LATITUDE

APRIL 15.—We left Seattle last night, and this morning the land was vanishing below the horizon. This little Japanese steamer, which is transporting our automobiles from one continent to another, dances on the vast green sea, which is bounded on every side by a sad, slaty sky. There are few people on board—an English priest, an old German woman, two Frenchmen of uncertain origin and mysterious profession, and ten or a dozen Japanese, full of humility and shame in their European clothes, which are too large for them, and in which their legs become entangled at every step. The crew, the officers, and the stewards are all Japanese.

April 17.—This fourth day of our voyage was as grey as all the others that had preceded it. The sea was calm, the sky overcast, the passengers weary. At night the old German woman, who has enormous feet and the teeth of a horse, has been regaling us with some of her groans at the piano, thus destroying all the pleasure of the day. To-night, however, she is silent, because there is a sick man on board—a Japanese who is dying from consumption.

April 20.—The invalid has been put into a first-class cabin directly opposite mine, and the corridor is filled with a solemn silence. Through the half-opened door

of his cabin can be seen the little wooden clothes-press on which the stewards have placed a bunch of carnations. The poor man left his country eight years ago to seek his fortune in America; but America has killed him. Feeling that he was dying, he wished to see once more his own flowery land and to die under the shade of his own trees. But Yokohama is far off; the sea is wide, and his life is ebbing away. Will he arrive? This evening the doctor has said decisively that he will, that he will be up to-morrow. The sea is calm, and the lady has resumed her melodies.

April 21.—Bad weather. A dense fog has descended on the sea, and the *Aki-Maru* is steaming at half speed, lacerating the air and the ears of the passengers with the wails of her syren. The Japanese did not rise. All through the night I heard him wheezing and coughing on his bed. Towards three o'clock he got up, with the assistance of one of the little Japanese "boys" who act as assistant stewards. But he had scarcely arrived at the companion ladder before his strength gave way, and he was carried back to his cabin. At six o'clock this morning the door was opened, and he was motionless on the cushions, with his eyes closed and his tiny hands convulsively picking at the coverlet, and the flowers had been taken away out of the cabin. To-day the steamer is more desolate and sad than ever. The table is almost deserted, the deck is uninhabitable, and the saloon in which three or four of the surviving passengers are wandering like souls in torment has a funereal air. Fortunately the melodious German is suffering from *mal de mer*, and the pianoforte remains mute.

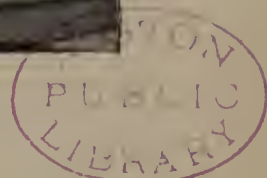
April 22.—The invalid is worse. He has been given



THE "AKI-MARU."



FROM SEATTLE TO YOKOHAMA. JAPANESE SAILORS.





injections of morphia and ether to soothe his pain, but they have not done much good. And the sea is rougher than ever. The fog is not so dense, but a strong wind has sprung up which lashes the sea into violence. The *Aki-Maru* toils against the impetus of the waves, rising against them, then descending into the abyss until her bows are covered, and the propeller races violently when it is left naked by the water.

April 23.—During the night the storm continued to increase in violence. Through the port-holes of the cabin, when for a moment the waves were tired of beating against them, one could see black clouds low on the line of the waters. Not one of us slept. We passed the hours in the captain's cabin, where we had taken refuge. Through the windows of this we watched the waves hurling themselves against the steamer for seven whole hours. We saw them arrive, swollen and high, move quickly to the assault, knock with a dull sound against the vessel's side, then leap over the bows and pour down from the conquered bridge in a whirl of white foam. For some minutes the steamer would be reduced to a standstill, then resume its fatiguing march. The shocks were short but very strong, and the slow heaving of the boat in the open vortex acted upon the nerves rather than upon the stomach, and the brain seemed to be beaten furiously and continuously by a hammer. We undressed at day-break, when the wind had dropped and the sea had begun to grow calm. The silent corridor was filled with the raucous breathing of the sick Japanese, who, as we are told, suffered terribly during this night.

April 24.—The storm is over and the sea is calm. The vessel advances on the long, flat waves like a grey-

hound ; the stewards have resumed their silent service, entering and leaving the cabins without a word ; the engines have resumed their imperceptible humming and the German lady her insupportable music. The sick Japanese did not get up to-day. He passed a calm night. Then in the morning, at sunrise, a crisis was reached. From my cabin I heard him for two hours on end torn by a convulsion of coughing which seemed as though it must burst his chest. And the doctor did not come in to breakfast, he was helping his patient. To-day a phonograph was brought into the cabin, and for three or four hours it bleated out Japanese march tunes, all equally hideous. But the invalid seems to have been quite happy. Then he was no longer able to endure the screech and the phonograph was reduced to silence. He remained motionless on his bed, with his mouth open and eyes shut. The cabin is full of sun and flowers, the stewards having taken thither the last few blossoms which were reserved for the dinner-table. Another little Japanese, a relative of the invalid, seated gravely on a stool beside the couch, turns over the leaves of a book of coloured pictures. All the passengers have passed before the open door to see him. This man who suffers so acutely, who will perhaps die at sea, exercises upon us a species of morbid fascination which induces not so much a feeling of pity and grief as one of veneration and awed respect. We all know his name—Oyukimura ; all know his banal story : the abandonment of his sweet but cruel land ; the new hostile country ; the useless daily toil ; the battle lost every night and resumed every morning ; and then the slow withering of the plant deprived of the sun and the lugubrious epilogue of a



solitary death here on the sea. He has, in a sense, become our friend, almost a relation, in this small iron cage where we gnaw our nails with impatience. And the German lady, fishing up from the depths of her parchment heart a small remnant of tenderness, has offered to watch over the invalid. Now she goes silently in and out of the cabin with her hands full of bottles and her face full of terrible secrets. The first-class passengers, who at first fled from her as if she had been stricken by a plague, now wait in the corridor and stop her as she passes. They ask nothing and she says not a word; but the question and the answer are clear to everybody—to-morrow; the day after to-morrow; within three days at most. . . .

April 25.—Another fog surrounds the steamer, which is once more compelled to go at half speed. But the wind has fallen completely and the sea is calm. The Japanese also is better, his respiration is less painful and the cough less racking. The musician from Germany has been able to leave him and go to bed, after watching through the night. In the cabin there is a little yellow man who is reading aloud some stories of old Japan. The sick man drinks in with intense avidity the words of the reader, which call up all the past of his country, the land which he has desired for eight years but will never see again. He does not know what the end of this voyage will be; he does not know that he will never again set foot on the sacred soil. He believes to-day that he will finally reach the desired port and that his women folk will come to meet him in little boats with their arms loaded with flowers; and his heart breaks with too much happiness. Towards seven o'clock in the evening he is again writhing in a crisis. The German

lady has resumed her sad task. She comes out towards nine o'clock, terrified and convulsed. Is it the end? Has death entered the steamer? This evening at the dinner-table there were two persons only, two obtuse Frenchmen, but there was no steward to wait on them.

April 26.—He died this morning at sunrise, calmly and without suffering. Up till midnight I had heard his thick breathing, which grew faster and faster every minute. Then it grew calmer. Towards three o'clock the door of the cabin was opened and shut violently several times; the corridor was traversed by people running, and the cabin was invaded by many people who chattered incessantly. Then silence fell on the ship. The German lady told me that he had died at five o'clock, expiring slowly, like a lamp in which the oil had run low.

He has been dressed in a large dark kimono, sown with little silver stars, and beside him on a table are his weapons—a knife and a revolver. All over the cabin, on the floor, on the clothes-press, on the bed, are dried flowers, the corpses of the flowers which had died in his room. The stewards, foreseeing the end, had kept them for him. During the morning all the passengers in the second and third class filed before the door, carrying in their hands little Japanese flags. They went into the cabin, one at a time, bent their heads to the pillows, murmuring in the dead man's ear who knows what mysterious message, which will reach him on his new voyage. At the foot of the bed the little flags formed a great red patch.

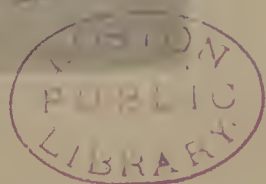
April 27.—Since yesterday evening a monotonous, insistent rain has been falling. The sky is grey and the sea an olive colour. A sense of sadness weighs on



ON BOARD THE "AKI-MARU."



JAPAN : STREET IN NAGOYA.





the whole steamer, owing to the melancholy burden that we are bearing. Already the operations for burying the body have begun, and the sack in which the corpse will be sewn is being made. Towards nine o'clock we are informed that everything is ready and the lugubrious ceremony about to begin. The body is wrapped in a large Japanese flag, and the man's knife and revolver have been placed in his belt of violet silk. All over the kimono have been pinned a number of little tickets, containing prayers for the most part, or salutations to ancestors, or messages to the dead—they will help him on the journey. The body is carried out of the cabin and followed by all the Japanese in single file, who march to the wailing notes of a flute. The passengers are on deck, in two lines, with heads uncovered. There is a whistle, a brief word of command, a violent clanging of bells, and the steamer slows down gradually and stops.

With a strange, unaccustomed softness in his voice, the captain begins to read the burial service. When it is finished, another rapid order is given, succeeded by an intense silence. The spectators watch while the corpse takes its last sad journey. Like a ship being launched, hesitating at first, then moving more rapidly, the burden slips down from the bier, cuts a hole in the water and then disappears. A ring of foam widens over the sea. . . .

April 28.—I have had to change my cabin. The old German lady is ill. The weather is good but cloudy.

April 29.—Land at last. We saw it to-day, appearing like a blue cloud in the sea, but the sight did not give us the least joy. It was for *him* rather than for

ourselves that we had wished it, and now our sole desire is to leave this mournful vessel and forget this lugubrious occurrence.

April 30.—We entered Yokohama at night, and the town was invisible. It was late for us to disembark, so we remained on deck until midnight. At that hour we were approached by a little vessel, from which a poor old woman boarded us. She said that her son was to arrive by this steamer, and that she had waited for him on the quay for five hours. She wanted to know where to find him. A Japanese officer, who was somewhat in a hurry, told her that her son had not landed because he was dead, and was buried in  $43^{\circ} 53'$  north latitude,  $155^{\circ} 39'$  east longitude. The old dame did not blink, did not say a word. She simply took a piece of paper on which the geographical position was written, folded it carefully, and put it in her kimono. Then, with a low bow, she rejoined her little boat, and soon the light of its lamp was seen dancing on the water. Perhaps she has gone to seek him. . . .

## II

### THE JAPANESE

YOKOHAMA is beautiful at night when one does not see the Europeans and their houses. By day it is horrible. It is an ugly, wretched, European provincial town, with narrow streets, peripatetic sellers of matches and obscene photographs, policemen, and mendicants; a vulgar, banal city, without electric light, without tramways, without elegant women; a town which fills the soul with disgust immediately one enters it. For all that one has come to see, and all that one has read in books, is found to be a lie, and complete disillusion follows.

Yokohama makes peace with Japan and with the writers of books at night. When the sun is drowned in the sea and the canals shimmer like molten gold, then the thin European veneer which by day shines on the backs of the people and on the walls of their houses disappears, and Japan is seen naked and wild and artistic, freed from all foreign imprint. ✓ After all—and this may at first sight appear a paradox—the Japanese are not a civilised people, presuming that civilisation is our European state of mind, the advantages of which we are so fond of preaching to all the world. ✓ Or perhaps they are the least Europeanised people in existence. ✓ Our influence has passed over their minds like the water of a brook over a polished stone, with-

out leaving any trace. ✓ They have relinquished the habit of always bearing arms, and have laid down a few railway lines; but nothing more. Beneath the armour purchased from Krupps they have remained the same magnificent men of plunder and rapine who for ages filled these seas with the clash of their swords.

At Tokio the people dress in European clothes and wear gold-rimmed eyeglasses. They travel in tram-cars, live in houses of brick, ✓ but not one of their fibres has been saturated, not a cell in their organism has been modified by contact with the New World, which their wisdom has arrested on the threshold of their houses. ✓ They have remained Asiatic to the tips of their fingers, to the roots of their hair; more Asiatic than any other people, and are decided so to remain. Like a supremely warlike people, however, they have thrown away their battle-axes and their rusty armour and have assumed such of our weapons as will serve them. ✓ And Europe, setting out with drums and trumpets to conquer, has seen herself conquered and disarmed. ✓ . . .

All this is nothing but the outcome of their racial instincts. A people with the mental habits of the Japanese, a people which is so completely lacking in the imaginative faculty and creative power, a people whose brain knows nothing except the immediate reality tangible to all the senses, can never open its arms and its windows to the wind from the west which beats against their shores and bends the cherry trees in their gardens. Like all people of limited mental power, they do not know and cannot conceive the good and the better which is placed beyond the horizon of their eyes. And they cannot live except in the present



and in the past. Their soul is immobile, inert, incapable of launching itself into the future. It is chained to the rocks of tradition, and as impervious as crystal to new ideas. They have remained stationary for ages in the midst of all the flux of civilisation, deaf to every appeal, bound fast to their immemorial customs.

Not one of their usages has been changed; not one of their customs has lost its force or its vigour in the course of the interminable life of their race. They are to-day, after the war with Russia, the same Samurai who in distant times conquered Korea at the point of the sword. Beside them, perhaps older than all, the grand Chinese civilisation has passed without touching them, and the marvellous Korean civilisation has blossomed into golden flowers without their ears or their nostrils being affected by them. Peoples succeed each other, rise and touch the sun, then fall; but these have remained firm, watching others live, flourish, and die. They have created nothing. They have never known anything except how to bend a bow and carry a shield. All their art, whether pictorial or plastic, is an art of muscular instinct, so to speak, rather than cerebral, and it, too, has remained stationary across the ages. It is stationary now, rigorously bound by tradition, rigidly confined within the lines and forms which were given to it ages ago. Their eyes and the tips of their fingers have never changed, and it is the same with their minds; they see to-day through the same pupils as in their most remote ages; they plan with the same fingers and think with the same ideas. They have not even been able to make a religion for themselves. They have plundered one or two religions here

and there on the sanguinary fields of battle, from pillaged towns and burned temples, and carried them back to their own country—modified, mutilated, and reduced them to a sterile cult of the things and acts of the past. Amaterasu promises nothing to his faithful—no paradise and no joy.

This undeniable immobility of their soul, this lack of mental flight, this character so tenaciously resistant to all that comes from the future and not from the past, is a product of the land which they inhabit. To become convinced of this it is sufficient to see what harmony there is between the country and its inhabitants, between the men and the things—a harmony which encloses the whole secret of their beauty. It is not merely harmony, but almost a servitude of men to things. In Japan man is not the master of Nature; he is Nature's humble servant and fellow-worker. He recognises its unlimited sovereignty and immense grandeur, and he places at its service his hands and his body, his habits and all his needs. ✓ A branch of acacia broken down by the wind, or a procession of snails along a hedge after the rain, have more interest for a Japanese than all the social problems of the world. ✓ He will always be ready to subordinate everything—himself, his house, and his family—to the interest of a cherry tree which cannot find sufficient space to spread out its branches glistening with rosy tears. But he would go to record his vote with considerably less enthusiasm. Commercial and financial interests do not exist for the Japanese, because they are not a mercantile people. There never was any reason why their towns, their houses, and their temples should be constructed. They were built where the

trees were greenest and where the fish could best flourish, where the water was clearest; they were built in order to complete and harmonise the landscape rather than because of the urgent necessities of man. You cannot find an example of a thing or a being which is out of harmony with the scheme of colour, Even the mousmés change the nuances of their kimonos according to the colour of the flowers which the seasons scatter on the branches of the trees or at the margins of the fields. The Japanese do not shout; they do not hurry or perspire, because Nature neither shouts nor perspires; they are fatalists because Nature is fatalistic; they are stationary in their beliefs and in their traditions because Nature is the same in her laws and their manifestations. And as the centuries have passed over their heads, this race has received the indelible imprint of the earth. It has ended by feeling in its veins, circulating with its blood, the lymph which enriches the plant and colours the flowers. And hence it has acquired a certain vegetative habit and, like a plant, it reproduces itself from generation to generation, but it is never renewed. It is known that environment exercises such an enormous influence on the character of man that it is able even to model his physical form into its own image. How great, therefore, will be the effect when this modelling influence has been exercised for ages and ages upon an entire race, but above all, when that race is lacking precisely in all those mental qualities which might redeem it and make it immune to these colossal influences. There is no doubt that every people resembles the land on which it was born, that it writes its history with pen, or sword, or plough; but of none is this

more true than of the Japanese. In the first place because they are islanders. ✓The sea is a solid barrier, an infrangible belt of steel which shuts in and preserves the virginity of a people and of a race better than any other defence. ✓ It opens before the prows of man, like the furrow before the ploughshare, and offers no resistance to his efforts, but it changes the man who thus violates it. A man who lives on the sea, or who takes long voyages by it, arrives at his final port a different being to what he was when he first set sail. His character has changed, and his eyes see things in a different light. The sea, with its subtle, acute influence, conquers him, penetrates his fibres and his brain. ✓ Every man of the sea is taciturn, a thinker and a fatalist. ✓ No man, no people, can resist the slow but resolute attack which is made day after day by the sea, which beats down a new barrier every day.

The Japanese, shut up by the sea in their flowery island, separated from everybody, in constant contact with stationary Nature, excluded from every form of life that is not their own, have necessarily had their brains crystallised into the forms of the most distant times to which their memories reach. They have found joy in beauty and beauty in the petals of a flower, and they are content. Beauty, indeed, forms the whole of their life and the whole of their desires.

Is it therefore astonishing that this should be a people of war? ✓ All people living on islands are war-like for the same reasons by which they are a muscular and not a cerebral people. ✓ A human organism which, for one reason or another, does not develop mentally must, by necessity, develop itself in the muscular sense. This is a theorem which is demonstrated by the whole

history of humanity, proved again and again by the thousands of generations which have passed over the face of the earth. An organism in a crude state is always more highly developed in the physical sense than one which is the last of a generation and which has its nervous system refined and quickened. The Japanese are crude and muscular, a people without nerves. Every people in whom muscle predominates have warfare and strife for their sole manifestation of vital energy. The Japanese must wage war by force of instinct, by the necessity of their origin and mental structure. They are like the Ottomans who carried their threatening swords through Turkestan to the walls of Vienna, and who, when their claws were cut, remained weak and inert. Incapable of creating, they only knew how to destroy and kill and plunder. A predatory race, the Japanese are lacking in the sense of personality; for them the people signifies the complex mass, the great body formed by a thousand little anonymous atoms. The Japanese never considers himself, never lives for himself. He cannot conceive man as the representative of a race. He is unable to sum up his own country in himself. The man does not exist and has no value. He does not enter into Japanese concepts as a single, thinking entity, acting by himself. The people, the race, is the sole unit, and the men are the anonymous mute particles which give it force and life. ✓All their efforts, all their activities are collective.✓ Even their art is not an individual art, which each artist understands and represents by his own idea; it is a national art, which has formulæ and canons established by generation after generation of artists. It is an art to which each one faithfully brings his pencil and his graver, but

not his brain and his personal inspiration. They do not understand, they cannot comprehend the grandeur, the strength of the man by himself who is not, so to speak, coagulated in the grandeur and the strength of the whole country. This is their patriotism, and it is this which makes them strong. ✓ It is this, above all, which opens and will open every heaven to their flag, and every earth to the rapid march of their soldiers. ✓ It is precisely those people who are deprived of all personality, who are the strongest and the most ferocious in war. For war is not made by individuals, but by the mass. . . .

The decadence of our Latin races is a result of the refinement of our nerves, of the ebullition of individual energies, of that intellectual-supremacy which has given to each one of us a distinct personality, with separate desires and ambitions and a critical spirit; which has destroyed the people to set up the individual in its place. Age has caused to blossom in our brains one of the most marvellous spring-times which has ever offered perfume to humanity, but it has weakened, corrupted our muscles, and rusted our arms. The living fountains at which we have drunk have gradually poisoned us because, without any doubt whatever, ✓ intelligence is the exact antithesis of war. ✓

But this is not the case with the Japanese. Years have not touched them. Centuries have passed, have whitened the trees and aged their history, but they have not even deflowered the people. Like the flowers in their gardens, like the gods in their temple, they have lived through the ages, motionless and smiling, generation succeeding generation, each one whispering into the ear of the other the words which have been passed

down from the earliest time. They are a mass, a race, an instinct, without genius and without intelligence, but with good swords, sharp claws, and a ferocious appetite. They have traversed the ages, hewing and killing, like good pirates, and they will continue to live and to fight with their souls empty, their brains sterile, but with their fists closed and their muscles tense.

### III

#### THE LAND OF TITANIA

MAY 7.—These terrible Japanese authorities have kept us at Yokohama until to-day. Eight long days have been spent in running from office to office, from ministry to ministry, in chase of an Imperial permit to enable us, as a favour, to cross Japan. Bureaucracy is the same everywhere, but in this country where, in addition to all the ordinary and unheard of complications, there is added a savage patriotism which directs it always towards suspicion and doubt, bureaucracy becomes sublimely fantastic and monstrous. In order to obtain this permit there have been necessary, I believe, at least one hundred different signatures, twenty schemes, thirty journeys, numerous yen, and eight days' time. It is a miracle that it has reached us to-day and that we are able to leave. This was a homage to our celebrity; otherwise we should have been here six months. At the door of the Hôtel de Paris some Yokohama journalists offered us champagne and said Adieu in English, in cold, measured words, but quite adequate to the occasion. It was so different from the rhetorical banalities on the theme of Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus to which we were invariably treated at the end of every banquet in America. So we are once more on the road. This crossing of the island of Amaterasu should certainly not be a fatigue, but a joy to our eyes, a con-



tinuation of the flowery routes of California, a resumption of enchantment.

Europeanised Japan, civilised, modern Japan, which already suffers from phthisis in the streets of Yokohama, dies immediately at the gates of the town beyond the Yoshiwara. It ends suddenly, killed by the fertile country which advances to the conquest; a country sown with brown houses over which swim great red cardboard fish. It ends, and Madame Butterfly comes to meet us, pure and spotless, on her little lacquered sandals and with her arms loaded with flowers.

There is a hill just outside Yokohama which we have to climb. It is green with the dark verdure of compact trees under the mass of which the brown earth disappears. On the mountain, between the tall stalks of the bamboos, which seem to be lances stuck in the ground at the entrance to an armed camp, under the rosy rain of the cherry trees, are a hundred or more statues of Buddha, aligned symmetrically, each on a pedestal of moss and ivy-covered granite—a hundred old Buddhas with large faces without a wrinkle, arms crossed motionless across their paunches, eyelids lowered over dead pupils—a complete Paradise descended here in the distant past and fixed for the eternal joy of believers.

On the pedestals sparrows impertinently make love, and in and out of the lobes of the ears pass processions of ants; insolent geraniums have erected their flaunting corollas in the palms of the hands. Some women in their simple kimonos, more flowery than the hills, pass in pilgrimage, with their little heads bent towards the ground, and men follow them, stopping now and again before a stone tablet on which is written the grandeur

of God. Then they descend along the green road to the boats, with their tall prows, on the distant river. Some little clouds of blue smoke rise from the burning incense before the serene faces of the great gods of stone.

It is a difficult and steep ascent. We pass respectfully, with heads inclined to the earth, and leave the spot with eyes full of joy and minds astonished.

Then the marvellous road begins. It is folded in a vesture of thick grass and passes between little dark houses of wood and cardboard; before strange temples of red and brown lacquer whose gates are guarded by great granite dragons with open throats and ready talons; between rice fields in which the sky is mirrored, and amidst a population of violet and blue, yellow and red kimonos which add flowers to the flowers in the gardens and on the edges of the road.

The noise of the engine brings people to the doors of their shops and to the great open windows. The men remain courageously firm, and watch us. The women—who appear to be cut out from the petals of a lily, so white and pale are they—flee, hide their faces in their hands, and watch us across their half-closed fingers. Crowds of naked children run behind us, shouting with joy and terror. An endless series of villages, hamlets, and towns, all alike, passes before us; two continuous hedges of houses on either side of us for mile after mile. All around is a free and powerful vegetation, a great green sea which surrounds this crop of houses and towns, which turns around them like a wave round a rock. And everything is magnificently in flower. It is a tremendous riot of blossoms, in the midst of which the houses with their great idols

of gilded wood, before which incense smokes, are lost and submerged. On the edges of the road the cherry trees weep rosy tears into the dust. Further on are lilies and red roses and triumphant orchids, a magnificent pomp of colour which fills the gardens, besieges the houses, climbs up to the light thatched roofs, descends and comes to die almost beneath our wheels. A thick, heavy perfume, consisting of all of the perfumes exhaled from all the dying blossoms, circulates in the air and beats into our faces like the wind, penetrates through the nostrils to the brain, and gradually becomes unbearable.

At every village our guide, a Japanese who speaks English, and who has been provided for the whole of our journey by a licensed association of guides of Tokio for the modest sum of four yen (8s.) a day, tells us strange and mysterious names which we do not understand, and cannot retain in our memories. They, however, have only a relative importance. For us all this swarm of houses and men is nothing but one immense town which extends along the edges of the road to the sea. Our mind, disorganised by the vast solitudes of America, is no longer able to classify, to divide or distinguish; it cannot enter into a small, minute orbit after it has traversed such immense spaces. The geographical stages of our journey have at last become the stages of our mind in the collection of impressions, and in America a name was sufficient to remind us of a day of weariness, of discouragement, or of a triumphal march. The villages were mile-stones in our memories, a species of landmark thrown down every now and again along the road. Here it is not so. There are too many names because there are

too many villages. We should prefer to preserve of all our wonderful journey in Japan a vast, confused recollection of strange houses, temples, flowers, women, and perfumes. . . .

We arrived at Atami towards sundown, and had to toil sufficiently hard to traverse the little town. Amidst the crowd of mousmés who pressed around us, and out of curiosity scorched their hands on our radiator, it took us nearly an hour to make the necessary manœuvres. We left our mysterious, terrible engine in the custody of an old fisherman, and went in search of food and repose.

May 9.—Atami sleeps, drowned in the tranquil morning light which tints the eastern sky with the colour of pink mother-of-pearl. The sea also seems to be asleep, motionless, without a ripple, in the shell of the flowery hills. Only the sparrows are awake, and chirp with open throats in the contorted branches of the pines. Amidst the silent little houses along the solitary streets the throb of our motor rouses echoes as of an earthquake.

We are soon upon the first spurs of the sacred mountain, Fujiyama, which to-day we must escalate. It is a rough task that we have before us, and although we started at dawn, it is uncertain whether by the evening we shall have arrived at the summit of the pass. There are eight miles of ascent, but it is such a climb that when we spoke of doing it in the motor-car our guide laughed in our faces. There does not exist a road of any sort, merely a little path about a yard wide, bent and disfigured by the caprices of the mules which have traversed it for the last thousand years. It is full of turns at every yard or yard and a half. It is not



A SHARP BEND ON FUJIYAMA.



JAPAN: WATER CARRIERS ON THE MOUNTAINS.

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a path, but a staircase with high irregular steps of granite. This sweet road rises continuously without rest and without pity, never permitting itself the luxury of a level stretch. There are eight miles of it, and the gradients vary between thirty-five and forty-two per cent.

We climb up this breakneck path, which is called the "Road to Paradise," because it is sown with thorns and difficulties. Among other things, the day is hot with a heat which is ferocious and asphyxiating, although the sun is still low on the horizon.

The car creeps with extraordinary difficulty along the almost perpendicular wall. The engine is soon overheated, and smokes and puffs from every part, like a short-winded horse.

At ten o'clock the sun, now high in the heavens, beats down almost perpendicularly on our heads and the temperature becomes insupportable. It is impossible for us to go five hundred yards without adding water to the radiator. The bonnet glows with heat and the enamel peels off in flakes. The white, blinding light, reflected from all the burnt rocks, seems to penetrate our eyeballs as if they were beaten by brambles. For some little time the path remains almost straight, and the Züst, using all its power, jumping in a terrifying manner from step to step, succeeded in getting forward slowly; but now, two kilomètres from Atami, the path we are following becomes bent into sudden and impossible turns, with narrow "virages" into which it is impossible for the car to enter. And precisely at the opening of this tourniquet the ascent is terribly steep and the steps higher than ever. The manœuvres begin, patiently, inch by inch, so that not one step shall be

made in vain. Forward, then backward. This is repeated fourteen or fifteen times while we push the car forward with our arms. Slowly it turns, overcoming an inch at every movement and gradually getting into a straight piece of road. It stops a hundred yards further on before a new tourniquet.

The heat becomes atrocious ; it fires our skin and our blood, fills our brain with flames and our foreheads with hammer-blows. Everything around us is burning—the miserable clumps of bamboo which climb with us towards the summit ; the sea, enclosed in a curved gulf ; the little grey villages in the plain beneath ; all are asleep, stupefied by the great heat and the torrent of cruel light. The air itself is, as it were, impregnated with flame ; it could be almost cut with a knife. The sea also shines intolerably, like a shield of polished steel from which the sun is reflected. The junks with their listless sails are dead and motionless in the midst of this sea of molten lead. Not a breath of wind is blowing and there is not an inch of shade on the ground. Piece by piece we get rid of our clothing. At first we dispense with our heavy coats, then our shirts, then our boots and stockings, and we toil and sweat behind the machine merely in our trousers, with our feet in straw sandals which do not defend them from the flints. And yet we suffocate in the heat. It is impossible to breathe the heavy flaming air, which is so thick that we seem to masticate it.

But despite the heat the car manages to ascend. Very painfully, however, inch by inch, stopping every yard to take breath, then urging onwards with all its force. But it ascends. At midday we have passed three miles along the infernal road to paradise. But



we are completely exhausted. Perspiration runs in rivulets along our naked backs, tracing streaks in the dust which is deposited there. Autran, of the *De Dion*, is overcome with giddiness and nausea, and can no longer keep himself on his feet. Haaga is completely unnerved. The cars cannot go any further. Let us seek a spot among the trees where we can rest.

After a short reconnoissance a place of repose is found. It is in the shade of some fine oaks which bend over a lovely little torrent, so as almost to caress it with their leaves. A delicious freshness breathes from the water flowing beneath these dense trees. We are like people who have fled from an arid desert, and who perceive a fountain in the distance. We all rush to the water to get there as soon as possible, and plunge our head and arms and back into the fresh stream, delighting in the shudder of cold which we experience at first contact with the water. Then we roll on the moss, forgetting the sun and the road which cuts through the landscape like a white, blinding, cruel wound. . . .

But we must continue. Painfully, with lowered heads, we re-entered the furnace and began again. A brief ascent, a turn, manœuvres, shouts, wheels directed by our hands—our arms fall to our sides, weak and dead; our legs are as limp as rags.

At two o'clock we are in a veritable inferno. It is not light, not rays, that the sun rains down upon our heads and backs; it is drops of liquid lead, pieces of lighted phosphorus—everything that burns and scorches, but not rays.

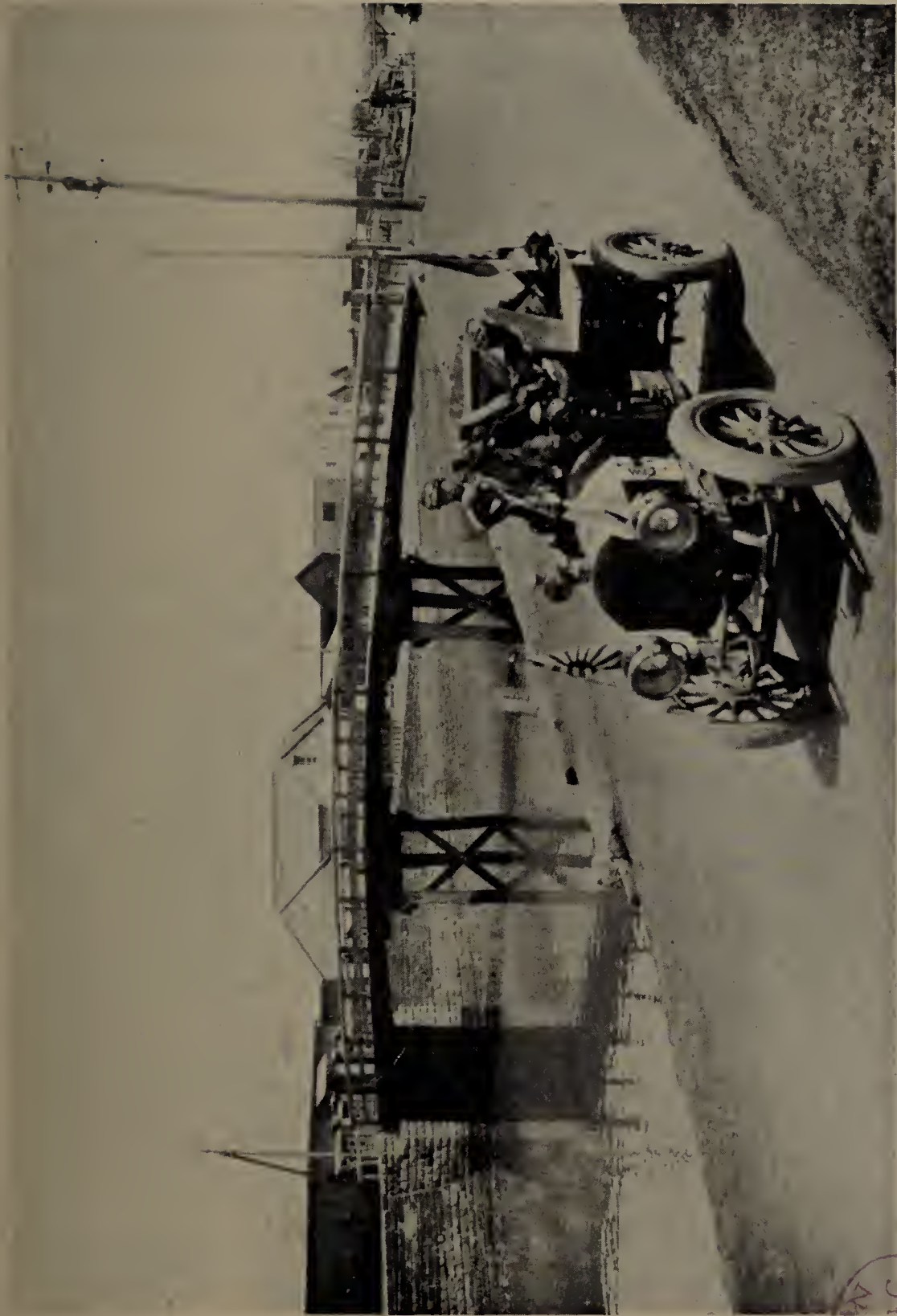
When will this torment end? It is impossible to look at the sea or the land, the glare is so brilliant. The

rocks themselves are incandescent mirrors. The car shakes, the open exhaust is red-hot, the water boils incessantly in the radiator, which we have had to leave open. None of us believes that it will be possible to reach the top. We shall certainly remain half-way up and the machine with us, melted by this heat. We push, but without any strength, without any heart, almost mechanically, and at every bend in the road our hands return automatically to the same spot. Our legs bend and our muscles give way. We are all faint and stupefied by the heat, and our brains are filled with nothing but visions of green woods and running water.

Another stream, another halt, and another doleful resumption of the journey. There are two more miles to be accomplished and two more hours of sunshine. But in two hours we shall be prostrate.

More bends in the road and more manoeuvres. It is now the hour before sunset. The travail continues. Our arms seem to be dislocated and our feet tingle all over, while the perspiration in which we are bathed causes our thin trousers to cling to our legs.

At last the incandescent ball falls to the horizon amidst a bank of white clouds; it changes the whole sky to red, and is now descending in a sea of blood. The junks with their sails make a black spot in the midst of all this purple. The sun is a long time in agony. Not wishing to be drowned, it spreads its flames desperately all round, colouring the clouds and the distant sky, the mountain and the plain. Then it is overcome. At first the edge is devoured by the sea; gradually the water rises to its middle, and it is finally submerged. It is dead! It is dead!



THE ZÜST IN JAPAN.

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A great shiver passes through the leaves of the bamboos. The sails of the junks, which were hanging inert, are swollen out, and the craft take their way quickly across the sea, which is still flaming. And we have arrived at paradise, where we shall stop for the night. Paradise, it should be known, is a heap of stones on the top of the mountain. ✓ But it is the custom of man to tire himself out and lacerate his hands in order to conquer a stone. ✓ . . .

May 10.—The descent towards the plain was almost as terrible as the ascent, full of short turns and folds and ruts. At Okabe, a little village at the end of the descent, we stopped for ten minutes to eat some hard-boiled eggs and rice, and to drink tea. Then we departed across an immense strip of grey and livid rice-fields, in which are reflected the motionless lines of willows. Wide and good just after Fujiyama, the road becomes constricted by the rice-fields, narrow, and almost impracticable. Our wheels travel along the edge of little ditches on a mere handful of friable ground, which at every yard gives way dangerously beneath our weight. The road is particularly horrible because it is not straight, but cut in almost rectangular curves, round which it is impossible to steer the car. Thus we are compelled to summon the assistance of the peasants working in the rice-fields to raise the hinder part of the car and turn it into the straight. Often the soft ground gives way and the car falls into a ditch. Then new efforts are necessary to get it out and place it once more on the road. The Japanese lend their assistance with a good grace which is quite enchanting. Terrified at first by the noise of the engine, they hasten up as soon as the machine gets

into difficulties. They approach timidly, in groups, exchanging smiles with each other, then put themselves to work with common accord, without speaking, encouraging each other with a guttural cry modulated on three notes. When they have finished, they remain to watch their work with a satisfied smile and with their oblique eyelids half shut.

At Suzoga we had breakfast in a large hotel and replenished our stock of petrol at one of the depôts which had been established in advance at every two hundred kilomètres along the railway line. We resume our journey and next stop in a little unknown village, the extraordinary name of which resembles the love song of a parrot. We stop because the wooden bridge which we have to cross was very dangerous. The authorities, called into council, refused to strengthen the bridge. But we had a talisman in our pocket—the Imperial permit. It was sufficient to show it, and the authorities threw themselves down, touching the ground with their foreheads. To-morrow the bridge will be ready.

May 11.—This morning we begin to travel upon a truly marvellous road, such as we have not seen since the distant days when we drove from Paris to Havre. There are no ditches, no hills, no bumps; it is level, wide, straight, between two uninterrupted hedges of low houses and naked children. It is a friend that we have found again rather than a road; a friend whom we never expected to see again until Asia was a cloud of dust behind our backs. We joyfully saluted the white milestones set rigidly one beside the other in perfect alignment, all at the same distance. We saluted also the streamlets in which a mere thread of water bubbles

amidst the moss, and the tiny stone bridges and all the little well-known things of the road which we have not seen for months.

The car also seems to be glad at finding a road once more beneath its wheels and at being able to advance for twenty or fifty or a hundred miles without a shock. It travels with a sharp whirring of the engine, which is once more free to devote all its strength to the wheels. We pass through little villages, filling the houses which are open to the road with noise and smoke ; pass under the eyes of the wondering mousmés, who modestly raise to their bosoms the hem of the wandering kimono ; rousing from their domestic repose the men of Nippon, who, clad in garments which are something more than scanty, are forgetting the fatigues of the war. . . . Naked children and dogs run after us, shouting and barking when they have overcome their terror. The great stone gods, crowned with ribbons and flowers, alone watch us indifferently as we pass the threshold of their granite temples.

At midday we are at Nagoya. At three o'clock at Watanabe, forty miles further on. We have never had such an orgy of speed. May it only last !

But it does not last. For at three-thirty the beautiful road, faithless like all friends, suddenly turns towards the sandy bank of a wide tumultuous river, beyond which all is mystery. But worst of all, the mystery begins on the near bank, where it is impossible to see any means of crossing to the other side. There is, it is true, a bridge, but it is constructed of slender bamboos, some six or seven tied together with iron wire and held up on two other bamboos placed vertically. It is a

bridge which shakes from one end to the other on its six arches when a child runs across. There is, it is true also, a ferry consisting of a boat about a yard wide, which transports as its maximum load an ox and three men. There is, it is true, a ford, but the water in the middle is three feet deep. There is, it is most true, a railway bridge, but the sleepers are two feet apart and beneath them is a void. . . . And then? For the moment the mystery is insoluble. We must consider and study it.

. . . . .

At last we decide to attempt the bridge. It is an imprudence which may be fatal to us and to the car, but there is no other way out of the difficulty. The bridge, a real work of art, has been constructed by a joint-stock company, which is represented by an old man full of bearded wisdom. He is desperate when we decide to try the crossing, and, to console himself, demands twenty yen in advance. They will, at least, buy some flowers to cast upon the tomb of his poor bridge.

We make all our preparations for combat rapidly. Haaga goes with Lascaris, of the *De Dion*, to explore the bridge minutely, and he returns with no very reassuring news. It seems that the bamboos are held together by telegraph wire. Everything is taken off the car—the baggage, the spare parts, tools, tyres, the posterior petrol tank, and the hinder part of the body of the car. There are left only the two front seats and the naked chassis. We are ready. The engine is started. A great silent crowd assembles around us, and more people collect at the entrance to the bridge. The opposite bank also is crowded. The engine throbs



more violently under the stroke of the accelerator, and the car starts. It proceeds very slowly, because the wheels dig into the soft sand. The crowd follows us step by step.

We go backwards for a few yards in order to get up speed. We shall cross as quickly as possible. A last moment of hesitation, a last salutation, and then . . . Forward! The car quickly climbs the little slope and shows itself on the bridge. It behaves like a ship at sea when it dives into the trough of the waves. The bamboos are bent under us in a semicircle, and the floor of the bridge raises itself before us in a sudden hill, which the car crosses in a jump. We have passed one arch! We descend once more into the hollow of the other arch with the same sense of a void suddenly opened beneath us. We rise again. Beneath us who waver on this flexible cord the river roars, and the bamboos are full of vibration and creaking. Two! Our whole mind seems to be held in a vice. If it should break! Two or three yards further on and we are in the middle of another arch. The creakings have become enormous; it seems that the wood is tearing. We hurry and rise again. Three! We are now almost half-way across, and can recognise the faces of the people on the other bank. The groans of the bamboos become as loud as thunder. It seems that the bridge must collapse. With suspended breath, and hearts that have almost ceased to beat, we descend once more. The bridge undulates convulsively. We can see the limpid water of the river washing against the bamboos. Four! The forehead of Haaga, who steers, glistens with a myriad pearls of sweat. His fingers grasp the seat as though he could raise the car

with his arms. The undulations are enormous; the car seems to be poised on an oscillating steel wire. It proceeds by leaps and bounds, like a ball. At every arch we dive down into a semicircle towards the river. If it should break! Five! The crowd now seems to be so near that we can almost touch it with our fingers. The old man of the bridge makes gestures of desperation. The creaking of the bamboos fills our ears and dominates even the noise of the engine. A dry crack half-way across the penultimate arch. . . . Courage, Haaga! Above the noise of the river there is a crash of breaking wood and cries of terror from the bank. We rise once more. It gives! It gives! The car jumps and approaches the last arch. . . . Its front wheels are on solid ground . . . then its back wheels . . . the bridge is crossed! The crowd, now silent, pushes forward to see the trunks of the fifth arch which are being washed down the river.

After crossing the bridge, we stop an instant to calm our emotion and consume some more rice and eggs and tea. To-day, for the first time, 'I have succeeded in swallowing pieces of raw fish without experiencing an excessive amount of disgust. It seems like masticating soap, but at last it becomes perfectly supportable. St. Chaffray, of the *De Dion*, is not of the same opinion. He regrets the terrible American steaks. . . .

We then proceed, but not very far. For at fifteen or twenty miles further on we were compelled to stop again before another bridge, which was absolutely impassable. The authorities have promised that it will be repaired by to-morrow, and that the work shall continue throughout the night by torchlight. We remain satisfied with their promises, and go to bed in

Nakaidzuni, the little town on the opposite bank of the river, leaving the car in the care of two old men. We stood on the edge of the bridge in the imminent sunset to take a look at the town, so as to be able to carry away a clear-cut image of it; one sees so little and so indefinitely from a flying motor-car.

The town is of wood, low, with little dark-coloured houses, all the same size, all symmetrical, with raised terraces and immense windows, across which one obtains a precious glimpse of domestic intimacy; little rooms of violet paper on which great flocks of storks swarm towards deep lakes; little ladies almost buried beneath the folds of kimonos covered with chrysanthemums; braziers of gilded earthenware smoking beneath the eyes of an ample bronze Buddha. In the narrow streets on to which the shops open, under the shade of their colossal waving signs, little mousmés trot on their high wooden sandals, with their backs curved under the weight of dirty offspring, almost hidden beneath their big paper umbrellas. The men, half naked, or dressed in a dark kimono, drag their light straw sandals along the ground. . . .

The sun does not enter between the houses, as his rays are caught up by the matting which spreads from roof to roof, and yet the houses are filled with a calm, soft light which filters through the transparent walls. Gardens flourish on the high roofs of straw. Above, beyond the matting, stretching towards the sky, great fish swim around long poles, and streamers flutter in the breeze. On the river, like great sea-birds skimming the waves, groups of junks, with their sails spread, are being carried by the current towards the sea. More slowly and solemnly the heavy rafts, loaded with

timber built up into fantastic shapes, creep against the current.

In the sunset, which paints the mountains violet and reddens the clouds which wander across the sky, all this seems like a marvellous dream, one of those fantastic visions which rise from the lines of an open book before the idle mind in a quiet, solitary room. . . .

## IV

### NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS

MAY 12.—At daybreak we proceed over the bridge, which has been summarily repaired, towards Otsu and the Biva Lake—the sacred lake of the Japanese. It is a magnificent road across rice-fields and villages, villages and rice-fields; between interminable lines of cherry trees in blossom and immense fields of irises—a dream landscape, superb and indescribable. But as we proceed more towards the interior the people have become more wild and primitive. Walking along the narrow lanes, the men dispense with every stitch of clothing, the women are naked to the waist. Moreover, the traditional cleanliness which made this country so brilliant and shining has gradually disappeared as we get further from the centres traversed by the railway. The houses are large and open, constructed of bamboo and oiled paper, as elsewhere, and the people walk with bare feet on the matting; but the feet are dirty and the matting black with grease. The children wade in the mud in the rice-fields, chasing frogs, and the women are dirty up to the roots of their hair. Everything in general, people and things, is covered with a species of reeking, blackish patina, like a smoky crust, which wounds and disgusts us all the more because previously we had been so enchanted by the meritorious and insistent mania which makes the Japanese the most

highly polished people in the world. Hitherto I had believed that this cleanliness, this absolute necessity that everything should be shining and brilliant, was a peculiarity of the race, a peculiarity which was a part of that extraordinary love of detail and the particular which gives so complete a proof of a mentality which is capable of speculating and probing to its most intimate fibre a fact, an idea, or a thing brought directly before their senses, but is incapable of defining or anticipating a new fact or a new idea, incapable of creating but capable of perfecting. I learned that I had been partly deceived, or was wrong in generalising; probably what we saw to-day was a people entirely different from that which we have hitherto seen; part of that Malay or Polynesian race which, in times long distant, must have disembarked from their light "prahos" on this coast, and by crossing with the purely Mongolian race already established on the island, must have produced the Japanese family, which is so different from all the true Mongolians of Asia. It is still more probable that in the district close to the western coast the Malay or Polynesian blood must have had the advantage, and hence its characteristic uncleanliness prevails. It is a fact that the people of the country close to the shores of the Biva Lake have an appearance much more primitive than that of their brothers of the east. And the same is true of their customs and their laws. These people, so the guide tells us, are the most vicious and the most villainous, lazy and sluggish in peace, terrible and cruel in war. Of property they have a most diverting conception—that it is by right transferable to whoever by force of arms or finesse of shrewdness should be able to take it.



A JAPANESE CROWD.



MOUNTAIN ROAD IN JAPAN.

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from his neighbour, but that it belongs to him only until another, stronger and more shrewd, should repeat the joke. ✓Of morality they have an idea that is as vague and tenuous as the foam of the sea.✓ The men do no work, the women labour in the rice-fields. The latter are misshapen, unrecognisable beings who have lost all the characteristics of sex, and whom nobody would be able to recognise or distinguish if it were not for the whining children bound on their backs.

Generally speaking, in the Japanese scheme of morality woman does not occupy a place of the first order. It is always upon her back that the cares of the household are piled. As amongst all peoples in a primitive or retrograde state of civilisation, she is the servant, not the companion of the man; the inferior being who finds first in her father, then in her husband, the lord and master of her life. But here she is not only the servant, she is the slave of olden times, who must dig the earth, prepare the crops, procure food for the men, and look after the children. Here she is the beast of burden who rises and goes to bed with the sun, and whose duty it is to keep the house and the family going, to look after and provide for everything. She ceases to be a woman—a *Japanese* woman, tiny and elegant as a porcelain statue, and becomes an animal amongst animals. She has been deprived of every luxury, of the little castle of hair, of the variegated kimono, the little lacquered sandals, and the voluminous obi, and is dressed in a large dark gown which descends to the feet and is confined at the waist by a black cord. She wears a great straw hat on her head to keep away the light. And so she walks through the rice-fields, wading in the mud. . . . This is the true Madame Butterfly.

At Otsu we arrive towards nine o'clock and stop before the shore of the sacred lake. The Japanese landscape, always marvellous, becomes superb when the sea, calm and tranquil, enamels the bend of the coastline with dark blue. But it becomes still more beautiful and impressive when it is completed by a lake over which the acacias bend their boughs and in which are reflected the placid, slender temples, embroidered with bronze or carved wood. How the limpid water, on which float red and blue flowers, harmonises with the dark green of the trees, with the brown junks which cross it, with the kimonos of the mousmés who chase butterflies along its banks !

The Biva Lake is not so small that one can take in the whole of it at one glance. Its margin is so tortuous that it stretches and bends amidst forests, insinuates itself in the wide flowery bays, is repulsed by long promontories, and returns to the shining central cup. And around it, between the trees and the water, is an endless garland of temples, suspended over the lake whose waters lap against wasted wooden piles, or erected half-way up the mountains, all reflected in the shining mirror of the water—a human miracle amongst all the miracles of Amaterasu, the great deity of this delightful country.

To the temple of Mudera, the finest and the nearest, we went in a light rickshaw. It is not a temple ; it is a complete sacred city enclosed in a circle of walls, with ancient turrets guarded by great open-mouthed dragons. One enters by an arch of hewn granite, on the threshold of which the noise of the town is suddenly hushed. Some stone lamps guard the entrance. Then we mount by a long staircase, so steep that the

steps seem to raise themselves over the head like walls. They are all worn away, corroded, rounded more at the corners than in the centre by the feet of hundreds of the faithful who have ascended the sacred way. It is only the young and those who are not weak who use the centre; faith belongs to the old and the weak. At the sides heavy balustrades of grey stone press against the forest. They also are worn smooth and polished by the hundreds and thousands of hands which have rested against them to sustain a vacillating step or a tired body.

An orderly line of trees with great smooth trunks and curved leaves, filling the air with a strong, penetrating odour, accompanies the staircase towards the steep summit. The holy city, following the outline of the mountain, is built around the great house of the gods to guard and cover it. Another solid enclosure arrests the trees, the steps, and the profane. A little gate of bronze, on which a chisel has written ferocious deeds of men and gods, gives way to a light push, and we enter the enclosure in which the silent and solitary citadel stands. It is very small, containing six or eight wooden houses with great curved roofs, at the edges of which tremendous animals, terrible in aspect, lie in wait with ready claws and snarling teeth. The light penetrates to the further part of the cell in which is enclosed the serene image of the god. Around the sanctuary hang lines of bronze bells, and from the storied ceiling depend great lamps of purest ironwork so fine as to resemble embroidery.

The gilded cell is wrapped in a great silence which not even the birds dare to break. Along the wooded pillars which sustain the precious ceiling runs a great

procession of figures, doleful and desperate, some engulfed in the sea, others struck by an enemy or fleeing from peril. They are coarse and vulgar, drawn with great strokes of the brush, splashes of harsh colour in which the coils of a serpent or the outlines of a human figure are only faintly discernible. There are a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand of them, all enclosed in lacquered frames, over which twine branches of mistletoe, covering the pillars, reaching to the roof, curling everywhere and being arrested only before the gilded iron screen which shuts in the niche of the god. Figures of carved ivory, good little genii, spirits who are kind to men, rest on inlaid pedestals before which the smoke of incense constantly rises. There is not a priest, not a worshipper; it is a tomb, not a house of the gods.

. . . . .

We had lunch at Miabara—rice, tea, raw fish. A crowd assembled around us while we were eating. It was, perhaps, more curious about us than about our car. Two or three times in their existence do they remember having seen white faces, wide-open eyes, and blonde or chestnut hair. As for the car, they can get a general idea of it from its more apparent qualities—the noise, the smell, and its capacity for homicide. But we neither smell, nor make any noise, nor kill; so we are strange and curious. They crowd around the oiled-paper screen which forms a window, press towards us, and laugh maliciously at our gestures and our clumsiness in managing the chop-sticks. . . .

Also at Rogoto, fifteen miles further on, we were compelled to stop, not to eat, nor even to rest ourselves, but because a little stone bridge riding over a canal had

collapsed under the weight of the De Dion, and the French car remains supported by its axles on a portion of the broken bridge. Our Japanese journey is crowded with these little daily incidents which delay and annoy us. They are a sort of protest by the land against the brutal intrusion which we make by our gross persons and these useless, noisy, smelling machines. In this country, where everything is harmonious, where men, things, and houses make part of the landscape, in which even the attitudes of the coolies make lines to complete the surrounding picture, we are evidently a tremendous discord. We are as high as the cherry trees, and to enter a room we must bend down. Hence is it marvellous that this land, whose secret is the sense of perfect harmony existing between man and his environment, should be unwilling to tolerate us Europeans who, with our weight, our noise, and our noxious odour, violate its Asiatic virginity?

Still further on, on the first counter-forts of the mountains, we were again compelled to stop before an absolutely impossible ascent, almost perpendicular, over a big mountain, narrow and full of the most atrocious curves. The De Dion, which was ahead of us, renounced the attempt, Lascaris and the guide proceeding to the nearest village in search of assistance. They will be hauled up by coolies, if possible. While waiting for them we wandered over the slope, plunging into the tall, fragrant grass with a lively sense of pleasure.

They returned at the head of a whole village. A species of syndic who governs it, a little man covered to his knees with a black tunic full of white hieroglyphics, threw himself down with his face to the ground,

as soon as he was shown the imperial rescript which we carried. He rushed to the furthest extremity of the village and began to hurl to the four winds prolonged guttural shouts, and little capering beings wrapped in dark kimonos, their heads covered with great straw hats and their legs naked, began to hurry up from every side. All the women who laboured in the rice-fields hastened to answer the summons—there were about forty of them, all tiny and miserable and misshapen by hard work. They harnessed themselves to ropes which were attached to the front axles of the De Dion and began to pull.

Heavily, amidst a great concert of shouts and cries which dominated the noise of the panting motor, the car began to move. It went on for a hundred paces, then stopped. The tired Japanese took a rest, laughing amongst themselves at our ridiculous-looking figures.

One—two—three—pull! They all press their muscles, bend their backs, and dig their toes into the ground. . . . “Aaaalaleikaaa! . . . Aaaalaleikaaa!” . . . Halt! Another stop, another exchange of laughter, and another noisy effort. “Aaaalaleikaaa! . . . Aaaalaleikaaa!” . . . The machine climbs slowly, by short stages; stops at every turn, and resumes its fatiguing march to the summit, carried forward, as it were, in the arms of all these shapeless, dirty, ill-clad women. . . .

They come running down the path, laughing and bawling, to help the Züst. But Haaga and our good engine have no need of assistance. We have carefully unloaded the tins of petrol which we were carrying as a reserve in case the depôts along the railway line should be lost, the baggage, the spare parts, tools, and clothing. Haaga mounts and takes the wheel. He

goes back a few paces to get up speed, and then . . . off! The Züst approaches the ascent with all the strength of its motor roaring through the exhaust with unheard-of violence. It gets over the first portion of the ascent, enters the first "virage," and creeps up to the second ramp. It bounces on the stones which cover the surface, and seems like a ship dancing on the crest of a wave, but it does not slacken speed. One stroke less of the engine, one brief moment of slackened speed, and the car would lose heart and ascend no more. Haaga knows it, and does not diminish the speed by a single stroke. He takes the turns at full speed, enters the ditches, jumps over the stones without slackening and without avoiding anything. He drives as fast as he can, clinging with all his strength to the wheel. From below I follow the progress of the Züst, with ears stretched to catch every sound. I cannot see it, but I hear its rhythmic pulsations echo from the side of the mountain. It puffs and roars, but still it climbs upward, scraping the edge of the precipice in the short turns.

Thus it arrives at the top beside the De Dion, and stops. The women, who had been running breathlessly behind, watch it with eyes wide open with astonishment. They laughed at the De Dion, that useless, noisy lump which was less powerful than their arms; they are stupefied now by the Züst, which has got over the obstacles so rapidly.

The road continues across the mountains with alternate ascents and descents. There are few houses and very few villages in this district, where rice cannot be cultivated, and from which the sovereign bamboo has chased every other plant. There are no flowers and therefore no men; that is Japan.

A little after sunset we stop for a moment at Chimena, a village of wood and mud, to refill our boiling radiators and light the lamps. A great crowd gathered round us while the rapid operations of taking in water were being completed, and some charming-looking mousmés came to offer to the guide the delights of their tea-house. The guide sang their praises with vivacity, making a long speech in order to convince us. St. Chaffray, who has a decided taste for the Japanese race, was attracted; Autran did not intervene; I cut the discussion short by saying that to-morrow at two o'clock a steamer left Tsuruga for Vladivostock, and that we must embark in the morning. This would render it necessary for us to travel all through the night, but it must be done. So we departed.

I was regarded with disdain by the mousmés, with melancholy resignation by St. Chaffray, with anger by the guide, and with stupefaction by the village. . . .

Immediately after leaving the village, the road dips precipitously into a ravine, a sort of gorge, at the bottom of which a torrent roars. The descent was not precisely perpendicular, it rather proceeded by stages, but the folds were so steep and narrow that the car could not turn in its length. And the gradient was terrible. It was almost impossible for the brakes to hold the car. And, as if that were not sufficient, the path is suspended, without any defence, over a void, and the wheels in manœuvring often stop immediately on the edge of the ravine, scarcely a foot from the abyss. Haaga is at the wheel; I precede and signal to him the maximum limit to which the wheels can go without precipitating the car below. The darkness, which is not completely broken by



our lamps, renders the manœuvres all the more difficult.

The De Dion has gone on ahead of us because it has a shorter wheel-base and is more easy to manage, and its lights already shine at the bottom of the dark abyss. We toil along slowly. There are only two of us, while on the De Dion there are four, and our car is by far the heavier. Also, our lamps work very badly. Each one of the "virages"—there are seven altogether—costs us tremendous efforts. The slender beam of light from the lamps does not illuminate more than four or five yards of the road, and it is broken against the grass which borders the precipice, leaving in complete obscurity the whole of that part of the road which is immediately beyond the "virage" itself. We plod along, blindly, in a terrible state of fear lest a false step should hurl us into the ravine below and smash our bones against the rocks. The margin of the precipice is entirely hidden by shrubs, and we expect from one moment to another that a slip of the car not checked in time will take it too far over. . . . We prefer to leave the rest to the imagination.

Two and a half hours of toil and stress and anxiety conduct us to the bottom of the gorge; two and a half hours of atrocious agony during which, twice in succession, we were compelled to make a portion of the ascent backwards on the reverse. At the bottom we found the De Dion stock-still with one of its wheels in a muddy ditch, from which it could not be extricated. We helped in the work of pushing and hauling it, and finally it was placed once more on its feet.

We then resumed our journey across the valley on

a road which was still difficult and dangerous, narrow and winding, wet and slippery, on which our wheels scarcely had sufficient room to turn. At midnight we were stopped before a broken wooden bridge which crossed the river, about one hundred yards from the village. The syndic of the place came up with a great lantern of oiled paper and watched us, with eyes full of malignant joy, grow disheartened against this obstacle.

The guide opened the conversation.

“This bridge is broken and . . .”

“Yes.”

“And why? . . .”

“It is being repaired. . . .”

“Very good. And how long will it be before the repairs are finished?”

“Well, that all depends. . . . Twenty days . . . thirty days . . . or two hours.”

“I understand perfectly. And what will be the cost of two hours’ labour?”

“Eh! Who knows? The workmen ask big money. They are becoming vitiated. . . . That cursed Europe, you know. . . .”

“Anyhow, without too many words, how much do you want for yourself and the men?”

“For them I think ten yen will be sufficient, and five for me. You understand I am the syndic, the authority. . . .”

The bargain is accepted, and the coolies are set to work, naturally on the understanding that everything will be finished in two hours. There is, indeed, an explicit clause in the contract that we shall pay one yen more for every ten minutes saved.

The bridge is completed in an hour and ten minutes. It is temporary, rudimentary, made of rough tree trunks held together by rope, but it is a bridge. And we pass over it triumphantly, saluted by great shouts of "Banzai!" What we do not precisely know is whether the "Banzais" are intended for us or for the numerous yen we have paid.

On leaving the village we were told that from there to Tsuruga—that is, to the sea—the distance is only ten miles. But what they did not tell us was that it is ten miles of mountain. For a short while we continued along the bottom of the valley, then suddenly the road folded upon itself and began to climb. The gradient at first was easy. The road is cut half-way up on the side of the mountain chain, suspended over the valley which extends beneath it at a depth of about 400 feet, and is dominated on the other side by a wall of rocks about 1500 feet high, whose tops are lost in the dark sky. The road follows all the caprices of the chain, winding in and out, projecting with its spurs, and full of half turns and incomplete folds. It is neither bad nor difficult, but it is dangerous and fear-compelling. It is about six feet wide, and projects beyond the wheels about a foot on either side, beyond which on one side rises a dark wall of mountains and on the other is a precipice. We hardly see this fearful abyss which is below us, but we see the shrubs which stand out on its edge almost at right angles, and which are mercilessly outlined by the dim ray of our lamps. This knowledge tends to increase our nervousness, which has been excited by the twenty hours' journey already behind us and the dangerous road already overcome.

The De Dion is about a quarter of a mile ahead, and

from time to time we see its lamps appear and disappear in the night, according to the caprices of the road. But even when we do not see it we hear its noise, the fretful pant of its engine, which is multiplied by the echoes of the mountain, and this certainty of not being alone, of having a companion in front, diminishes in some degree the unaccountable nervous anxiety which invests us this night.

We get along fairly rapidly, in spite of the innumerable turns. But we travel with our minds in a state of suspense. The consciousness of the void beside us induces a species of slight vertigo and a sense of ungovernable fear. Haaga even is tremendously nervous. He steers without any elasticity, without any delicacy of touch, with great resolute turns of the steering-wheel of which the whole car resents the huge shocks. His eyes stare fixedly ahead, his hands are rigid on the steering-wheel, and his feet nervously touch the pedals. Usually we do not speak, but this night we speak less than ever. Words will not come; the ideas, or rather the idea, which occupies our mind has no need to seek expression. It is present before our eyes, perfectly visible, fixed to that green wall which, ten inches from us, falls into the abyss. At two o'clock our lamps go out and we remain in darkness. Haaga has scarcely time to pull up before we both shout in terror. It is a good quarter of an hour before one of the lamps, and only one, can be got to burn. When we start again the De Dion is already far off with its lamps shining on the opposite wall of mountain, higher than us, like two will-o'-the-wisps. And the murmur of its engine becomes fainter and fainter. At last it disappears suddenly and mysteriously. . . .

We continue, alone, more anxious than ever. Towards 2.30 rain began to fall in little drops which rustled amidst the leaves of the trees and sported in the beam of our lamp like atoms dancing in a ray of sunlight. We did not even stop to put on our water-proofs. We were quite unable to concern ourselves with the slight annoyance of the rain when our minds were so distressed by the tormenting agony which had lasted already about three hours and would last we knew not how much longer. A stone jerked away from our wheels to the left, rolled to the precipice, and fell, rebounding three or four times, with a dull sound. We followed its rumble with exasperated nerves, bated breath, and the car at a standstill. Then we started again.

We proceed still more slowly, for the road, perhaps by an illusion of our eyes, is becoming narrower. Haaga is quite feverish; his hands curve tightly round the wooden circle of the steering-wheel, his eyes are fixed beneath his knitted brows. Uncertain and vacillating, he steers with a nervous, almost unconscious motion, directing the car obstinately against the wall of rock, which it almost touches with its wheels. At every moment he has to correct the direction and steer towards the left—towards the pit, so as not to smash the wheels. Our course is, consequently, a continuous oscillation and winding which only tends to increase our anxiety.

At three o'clock we suddenly find ourselves in front of the mouth of a dark tunnel. Another road continues along the ridge of the mountain. Which is the right road? The De Dion is far off and with it our guiding star has disappeared. There is no indication to

show which way we should take. I dismount to see if I can find any trace of the passage of the French car on the ground. . . . I find it! On the ground the anti-dérapants of the De Dion have left the imprint of their steel studs. Forward!

In the tunnel the lamp goes out again and we are buried in darkness. We relight it, then continue. Outside the tunnel again there are two roads, one ascending to the left, the other descending to the right. We choose the second, although the traces of the studs of the De Dion are very confused and uncertain. We take the second for some inexplicable reason—for no reason, perhaps—probably because it descended. It was certainly not because we were at all sure of the direction; indeed, we had no precise idea of the direction; we only knew that at the end of one of these roads must be Tsuruga and the sea. It is curious, too, that we paid no attention to estimating the distance traversed, which had become almost automatic with us, a species of sixth sense. We had been told that Tsuruga was ten miles from the last village at which we stopped, but it was not Tsuruga that we wanted, not the end of this stage, but the dawn, light, an end to the thick darkness which unnerved us in the difficult journey along the margin of a precipice.

The descent is short and steep. The road falls almost perpendicularly to the bottom of the valley into the fearful ravine of which we have endured the incubus for three hours, and then continues to run level between two walls of hills straight to the west. The hills press upon it and narrow it on either side. Then suddenly they fall upon it and strangle it in a wild gorge. Our anguish, agony, and fear begin again.

The horizon, which has been shut in twenty paces away from us by the irregular profile of the mountains visible in the dark sky, suddenly opens, and far in the distance there shines a light. All the rest is a tremendous darkness. We cannot see or recognise what it is. We only know that it is an enormous black mystery, something terrible and unknown, opened before our useless eyes. The path becomes narrower than ever, almost impracticable, and at the edge of it there are, as before, shrubs growing at right angles. The rain comes on again, but this time in large drops, and the light of our lamp flickers.

We tremble with nervousness. What is this dark thing which stretches before us and fills us with unreasoning panic—a sort of invincible fear, against which we are absolutely unable to react. We cannot see, but the sense of feeling this enormous pit open beneath our feet at six or eight inches from us tells painfully on our nerves. We proceed slowly, inch by inch, with eyes continually fixed on the wheels which graze the leafy margin, with all our soul crouching behind our pupils and with hearts beating in our throats. Every deviation, every shock, every stone that falls gives us a violent shock and sends the blood rushing to our brain. With feet stayed against the floor of the car and hands knit tightly round the rail of the seat, I wait for light and liberation to come. Haaga does not look me in the face, but I must be as pale as he and, like him, wet with cold perspiration. His hands tremble with the constant strain on which our lives depend, and his right foot presses firmly on the brake pedal. . . .

The dark thing beneath us is the sea, the sea! We hear it break, murmuring against the rocks. We are

suspended over the sea at a height of three or four hundred yards on a path which scarcely contains us, and of which we graze the margin. This discovery was a refinement of anguish, because if at first we were unable for an instant to forget the terrible mystery beside us, now the continual moan of the waves dashing against the mountain and increasing every second gives precision to our fears. What a horrible death—torn by the sharp rocks and beaten again and again by the sea!

Our lamp goes out again, and we are once more in darkness. When the throb of the engine ceases, the noise of the sea becomes tremendous. It seems to shout and call us in a loud voice. There are only three matches left in the box, and they are wet. With the only one which we succeed in igniting we light one of our candle lamps. Thus we escape the risk of being held up until daybreak.

While Haaga is looking after the lamps I explore, searching on the rain-sodden ground for the tracks of the French car. They cannot be seen, either because we are on the wrong road or because the marks have been obliterated by the rain. But we shall not turn back. In the first place because it would be impossible to turn in our own length, and secondly because we are unable to go over the painful road twice. We shall travel until the day, then we shall see. . . .

We resume our journey, but the path becomes absolutely impossible, so narrow that our wheels—scarcely three inches from the abyss—scrape the leaves of the shrubs on one side and the side of the mountain on the other. At one moment a projecting rock carries away our acetylene gas generator, while another



touches the hub of one of the front wheels. We are again brought to a standstill in the dark. The damage to the hub is not very serious, and the wheel will hold out until we get to Tsuruga. But it is impossible to repair the lamp in any way; the generator has been pierced by the rock and is useless; but we still have the candle lamp. . . .

We attach it by a piece of iron wire to the end of a branch torn down from a tree, and fix it to the front spring on the right-hand side, so that it stands out and illumines the strip of land separating us from the precipice along which the external wheels must travel.

Then forward again, in this terrible night on this atrocious road, with heart, brain, and breath suspended. How the sea howls beneath us!

. . . . .

It is day. Slowly the dark atmosphere around us becomes grey, violet, pink, gold, and the chariot of the sun gallops into the heavens. With the light the mysterious landscape ten paces from us also comes suddenly into sight. The unknown awesome thing has fled with the darkness, and before our eyes stretches an immense blue sea, full of brown junks with their great inert sails. Down below are wooden houses hidden amongst trees—Tsuruga, for a certainty!

We look round at all this in surprise and astonishment. . Was that the pit—was that the terrible unknown peril which accompanied us beyond the margin of the road? Is it that thing, so beautiful, which has caused us so much agony and so much fear?

The rain ceases.

## V

### ON THE SHORES OF THE ARCTIC SEA

WE disembarked five days ago from the *Longmoon* at Vladivostock after a wearisome journey. Japan is already far behind us, lost too soon, like all beautiful things. Even this town, so much desired during the long days of the voyage—which were spent in quarrelling with the Chinese stewards and with the German cooking—cannot make us forget the horrible journey. Vladivostock is an immense barrack, a line of ugly white houses with muddy roads, miserable shops, gargantuan churches—and officers. There is an army of officers, all covered with gold lace—blue, violet, silver, and yellow officers; a mighty river of variegated officers who display themselves on the wood pavements as if to show their disdain for flowery spring, which has passed beside Vladivostock without touching it. It seems at first as if this were a town in a state of war, and that all this military splendour must leave to-morrow for the battlefield. One gets a terribly warlike idea of Russia here in Vladivostock. ✓ Judging by the gold and silver lace, which is loaded in complicated embroideries and arabesques on countless uniforms, the Russians should be a formidable, warlike people, ✓ something like the nation which we have just left. Only one remembers that at Tokio the officers

are not so brilliantly dressed, and do not walk along the streets arm in arm with ladies. . . .

Vladivostock is ugly, tremendously ugly, dirty, inelegant, and useless. What is the good of it to-day, and why does it exist? We are told that it is the focus of the Trans-Siberian Railway. But had that famous line, which has served and serves no purpose except to frighten the Mongolian horses in the deserts of Transbaikalia, any need of a focus? Vladivostock was intended to be a metropolis; it has remained a railway station. It was to revive the proud story of Nineveh and Babylon; it has become an enormous, useless barrack, full of wounded soldiers, of scintillating officers, and Chinese thieves, and mud. Evidently it was destined to die before it was born. ✓ It is the mere embryo of a great town. ✓

We have been here already four days, which we have spent in running about from door to door, from office to office, to obtain visas, permits, orders. Naturally, nothing has been done—as was to be expected from any self-respecting bureaucracy.

But the Thomas has arrived. It did not do the journey with us in Japan, and arrived here by the following steamer. The Protos was here already, undergoing repairs; the De Dion, which arrived with us, is not continuing the journey, but will embark to-morrow for Shanghai, whence it will be despatched to Peking.

So we are *au complet*, we three who managed to survive the terrors of America. Sirtori, who was tired of the race and abandoned us at Seattle, has also come to rejoin us here. We are awaiting the permits, ukases, and orders—and petrol. There was a little

petrol in the country, in the hands of certain Germans—Kunst and Albers—and St. Chaffray, who did not wish at any cost to abandon the race, bought up the whole stock and became a monopolist. He assembled us all together this evening in the Hôtel d'Allemagne, and said—

“There is no petrol; there are no means of getting any. What there was is in my possession, and I offer it to the car which will agree to take me on board.”

The proposal made us furious. We would not agree to this imposition, and we all refused. We would find other means of procuring the combustible.

May 21.—The Thomas and the Protos left this morning under a torrential rain and amidst the general indifference of the population. They managed to procure some petrol from Kharbin. St. Chaffray is also resigned, and left with Autran and Lascaris by the Trans-Siberian express. He has ceded to us all his rights over the petrol, and has placed us in communication with the agent of the *Matin*, who at the present moment, I suppose, is at Kharbin, and who will arrange to supply us along the railway line as far as Kharbin. For we shall follow the track of the Manchurian railway, taking advantage of the path traced beside it by the navvies' wheelbarrows at the time the line was built. And it will be easier to get our supply of petrol. If we wished to follow the great Mandarin road, which accompanies the railway northwards as far as Nikolsk-Ussuriski, then descends towards the south in an enormous curve, passes Kirin, rises again towards Khailar, and then joins the great postal road of Transbaikalia, we should lose a tremendous amount of time, and should have to be preceded by a large caravan of

petrol. Hence we shall follow the postal road as far as Nikolsk, then to Pogranitchaya, Mulin, Kharbin, and Tsitsikhar, and at Khailar rejoin the main road, which, crossing the Buriat territory through Nertschinsk, Tchita, Verkne-Udinsk, and Missovaya, finally reaches the Baikal Lake, follows its coast-line, and stops at Irkutsk.

And we shall leave when it pleases God, or the representative of *Le Matin*. . . .

May 23.—I have discovered a cinematograph and an Italian. He is a musician, most naturally; the last survivor of an Italian expedition which came to plant its tents in Manchuria at the time of the war. They were travelling in Russia, fiddles and trumpets under their arms, giving concerts, when the war broke out, so they hurried where everybody else was hastening, for in no place are there such good markets as beside a battlefield.

These Italians arrived after endless wanderings at the tail of a convoy of soldiers who were sixty days on the road. They detrained at Kharbin and drifted from one to another of the café-concerts which flourished everywhere in the midst of the army. They were not present at any battle it is true, but they saw the eve of every fight. With their music they accompanied the steps of drunken officers dancing cake walks with pious ladies of the Russian Red Cross, and in the morning they saw the defeat, the dead, the retreat, and the disaster. They played their waltzes and their "matchiches" at the rear of the retreating army to the surviving officers, who still got drunk and danced with the Red Cross ladies. They accompanied the retreat to Kharbin, still playing, and there they stopped. They wished to recommence

giving concerts, to find a new army which had need of their sweet strains. But peace had already come, and the officers were returning to Russia. So they were profoundly discouraged. Evidently it was useless to remain there. Those who had sufficient money to buy a ticket returned tranquilly to their homes in Italy. Others sold their violins and trumpets to some Chinese orchestra and went to dig the soil beside the Baikal Lake. One only remained, he who is to-day in Vladivostock and plays the piano in the cinematograph room, and who is, I believe, the only Italian in the whole of Manchuria.

✓The Italian plant does not give any fruit here, neither does the English, the French, the American, or the Japanese. The only one that flourishes is the terrible German race, traces of which I have seen in the sand of every country. ✓ It has intruded itself, its language, its beer, and its customs everywhere. America swarms with Germans; there are villages in which everything is German. In Japan, commercial affairs, the steamship companies, the industrial companies, everything is German and made by Germans, and the language more generally used is German. In Siberia and in Russia one speaks only in German and of the Germans. At Vladivostock everything is German: the principal bank, the principal firms, the steamers, business, the semi-official language, even the celebrated Russian Volunteer Fleet is German. They are odious everywhere, but in this town at the end of a continent and on the shore of an unknown sea, where the Germans have managed to become the gods and protectors of the country, ✓ they are absolutely insufferable. ✓

May 28.—Sirtori has also left. He has been recalled

to Italy for some silly reason by the Züst people. When he left us at Seattle we knew more or less certainly that we should see him again at Vladivostock. But now he is leaving definitely by the southern route on a steamer, whereas we are continuing on the hard northern road in the motor-car, and we shall not meet again until we arrive in Paris. Sirtori wept when the steamer left the quay. We, the car, and the journey had entered into his life like a wedge and become part of his existence, one of its necessary constituent elements. Now that he is leaving us he can scarcely restrain his grief. . . .

So Haaga and I remain more than ever alone and sad in this sad country. We sleep together in one room, always go out together arm-in-arm, eat together at the same table, owing to an instinctive fear that one may be snatched away and leave the other alone.

But who knows when we shall be able to leave and when all the depôts of petrol will be ready?

June 4.—We shall start to-morrow. At breakfast this morning the fateful telegram arrived. Haaga went to the garage of Kunst and Albers immediately, without finishing his breakfast, to get the car ready. I wished to take a farewell of Vladivostock, the wretched town where I have spent twenty-two days, where I have suffered weariness and solitude, and which I have so many times mentally despatched to the devil. And precisely to-day the sun comes out. It is a meagre and consumptive sort of sun, it is true, but it is the first we have seen for nearly a month. The whole town became almost festive with surprise, and the officers glittered more than ever. Even the Russian cruiser in

the port—the last survivor of the catastrophe—and the steamers were covered with flags of all colours.

During the morning I went in pilgrimage from one place to another to say good-bye to the monuments, the churches, the streets, the men—in a word, to Vladivostock. I called in turn at every office to carry out the last formalities, to obtain the last permit, and to beg the last crumb of information.

Shall we arrive? Everybody says “No.” These great men of the Russian Government, all covered with gold lace, have told us with ironical smiles on their lips and their eyes full of mockery that our journey is doomed to failure. We shall be met on the road by Chunchuse brigands, Manchurian tigers, fever, plague, pestilence, famine—to say nothing of the mud after three months of rain, mosquitoes as big as locusts, and other similar delights. These good gentlemen are perfectly convinced that we shall not go five hundred miles without stumbling into one or other of the pitfalls already enumerated, and they weep already over the folly which is hastening us towards such a complication of catastrophes.

I returned to the inn feeling very much discouraged. Haaga had already got back, and he, too, was sad. He tried to stifle his thoughts and stun me by speaking without a pause, telling me of a guide he had found, of Italian origin, a certain Vitali, who for three and a half roubles a day would agree to accompany us across Siberia; and of the champagne offered to him by some of his friends, etc. etc. Then we went to bed.

June 5.—We left Vladivostock this morning under a pelting rain which penetrated everywhere—down our necks, up our sleeves, and through our useless water-



proofs. The odious town, scattered over a multitude of steep but short hills, was soon hidden behind a veil of impetuous rain. The innumerable white rectangles of the barracks, the fortified crests bristling with guns, the melancholy port, all disappeared behind the curtain which hid it from our sight when we were a hundred yards away.

The road issuing from the town in the direction of Nikolsk-Ussuriski rides uneasily over half a dozen hills. The going is most laborious owing to the steep ascent and the continuous mud, on which the wheels can scarcely secure a grip in spite of the antidérapants and the chains which we have brought from America. But scarcely has the last soldier disappeared and the last barrack is in the distance than the road becomes good, level or slightly uphill, muddy still, but with a mud in which the car does not stick. All around us stretches the steppe, punctuated here and there with wild irises and lilies of the valley. Little Siberian ponies with thick manes and slim legs gallop amidst the tall grass. Far in the distance the steppe is enclosed on the one side by the sea and on the other by the railway.

We travel fairly fast, faster, indeed, than we had expected. The car rides lightly on its wheels, as since our American trials we have learned to lighten it, and the wheels open a way through the mud without excessive effort. But the direction is somewhat uncertain.

At two o'clock we are at Udienskaya, twenty-two versts from Vladivostock, where the Americans had stopped on their first day out, to effect some repairs. The road—indeed it is now nothing more than a path—runs from Udienskaya along the seashore, being

invaded occasionally by the water, which sometimes licks our wheels and retires, leaving the sand covered by a layer of seaweed. Night had fallen when we reached our next stopping-place, forty-two versts from Vladivostock.

June 6.—By four o'clock this morning we were again on the march. The road is more difficult than before, because it begins to creep up the mountains, and the mud—four inches thick—renders it almost impracticable. The car proceeds by fits and starts, stopping at all the difficult places and picking out the easiest way, sometimes across the fields, sometimes along the grassy ridge of the mountains. It is preceded by a scout, who sounds the mud with a long stick. It is not the soft liquid mud of yesterday, through which the wheels could pass easily, and the only disadvantage of which was that it covered us from head to foot with filth, but it is a clayey, tenacious mud, in which the tyres are irresistibly held. Sometimes, instead of the mud it is a layer of thick grass covered with half-baked clay, which floats on a pool of water. It appears to be solid, resists the pressure of the stick, and the car advances on it slowly. But before we have gone two yards the grass gives way and the car sinks in, sometimes up to the axles. The resistance of the surface having thus given way at one point, the whole layer begins to oscillate and tremble, and water spurts up on every side. It is impossible to get any leverage, or even for horses to pull us across. The car must advance under its own power inch by inch along a platform of planks laid down in front of it. Sometimes we remain three, sometimes six consecutive hours, fighting against the viscid mass. We are wet through, benumbed, hungry,

worn out by the continual pushing and hauling and digging.

When we have got over one of these treacherous spots we resume our march slowly, until we come to a half-rotten bridge that will bear us, or a place where our wheels do not slip, or where a slight push does not precipitate the car into a ditch.

It is worse still at night, because we are in constant dread of what the white band of light from our lamps may reveal a hundred yards ahead. Then when we reach another ditch or morass, all our nervous tension and excitement pass, and we begin to work with our hands and spades until the car again finds the road.

At daybreak a couple of houses appear, then some barracks. It is Rasdolnoia, and we stop there for a couple of hours, utterly worn out.

June 7.—Some officers whom we fell in with by chance, moved to pity by our wretched appearance, offered us a shelter from the rain, an excellent table, and fresh water. We ate like wolves, happy in the mere animal pleasure of swallowing. We had been fasting since yesterday morning. At Kiparisso, a little house on the border of a forest, we had discovered a dry sausage and some vodka, which we conscientiously divided. At Rasdolnoia this morning we were unable to obtain anything but a piece of bread and some dry fish. But here was meat and good bread, fish, and knives and forks. At dessert an officer of dragoons proposed a toast to us, to Italy, to everything that was Italian, and, above all, to the health and glory of all Italian horsemen, especially those of the Riding School of Pinerolo. Their simple, unpremeditated words were

more moving than all the rhetoric which had been prepared for us in America at the expense of Dante Alighieri and Christopher Columbus.

They accompanied us on horseback along a good stretch of the road, bade us adieu after we had reached a broken bridge which we had to rebuild in a rudimentary fashion, and, standing in a group on the top of a rock, they shouted "*Evviva*" until we were beyond the range of their voices. Then, when we were almost out of sight, they raised their revolvers and fired a salute.

Soon our troubles begin again. The road becomes absolutely impracticable; the River Ussuri has washed away all the bridges and broken down the dykes, and we navigate, as it were, in the midst of a flooded plain. The water reaches up to our springs, and it is necessary to proceed at a walking pace so as not to give the magneto a bath. And the perils are increased by the fact that the road is absolutely invisible beneath the flood, and the car falls into every hole that opens under its wheels. In a pair of heavy india-rubber boots, I go ahead testing the depth of the mud, tumbling into ditches and getting wet through. We take it in turns to perform this office, each doing four hours. To-day I am on duty, but to-night I shall sleep on the little seat at the back of the car, while Haaga and the interpreter watch.

At six o'clock in the evening, after painful efforts, we had traversed the twenty versts which separated us from Nikolsk-Ussuriski. Some melancholy personage, with a mournful voice, wished us to pull up, but we told him that the Americans were still ahead of us by too many days. So we went on. At midnight we had

done two more versts, but my promised sleep was a failure because we were three hours battling against a lake of mud.

The flood continued to rise all round us, and the car began to show signs of fatigue. The water had already passed the springs, and another inch and a half would take it to the carburettor and the magneto. We were situated practically on an island. The plain all round us was like an immense lake, from which emerged, scarcely visible in the darkness, the contorted profiles of the trees. We could scarcely see the water because the continual spurting from our wheels had put out our lamps, and all the light we had came from an oil lamp hung up high, but we heard the continual swish which accompanied the well-known murmur of the engine, and we felt cold drops splashed in our faces from time to time.

At two o'clock the rain ceases and a great reddish moon breaks through the clouds. As far as the eye can reach a vast waveless ocean extends. It is opaque and calm, inhabited by a strange population of skeleton trees which stretch their naked arms to heaven. Never, even in the depths of the desert or the Valley of Death, when our tongues were swollen with thirst and our brows throbbled with fever, had we experienced such a complete and painful sense of solitude.

At 3.30 Haaga stops the engine and the silence becomes unbearable. The water, which at midnight had almost reached the footboard, has now surpassed it and gained the cardan shaft. We dismounted the magneto and the carburettor so that the water should not penetrate them, and we are now waiting. Our guide, who became desperate, wished to leave us. We

told him he was free to follow his own inclination, but at the last moment he lost courage and remained.

By four o'clock the water has arrived almost to the chassis and it is constantly rising. At 4.30 it has conquered the chassis and is penetrating the carriage body. On the water all around us are floating the bodies of drowned cattle, some of which collect around the car, against which they are driven by the wind. The guide, who had put out his foot to try the depth of the water, received a friendly blow from the horns of one of these animals. At five o'clock day breaks, and the water is still rising. The whole of the wheels are submerged, the tops of the pneumatics being on a level with the water. The cylinders must be half drowned. The enemy still gains ground. The guide is weeping like a child. We are all collected on a box at the back of the car because the front seats are threatened with inundation from one moment to the other. We decide to leave the car and go in search of assistance. We toss up a coin to see which direction each shall take. I shall swim towards the west, Haaga towards Nikolsk, and the guide towards the east. Then we wait for the solemn moment to arrive. It is six o'clock and the rain has come on again. . . .

Six o'clock. For an hour the water has shown no further sign of rising. Indeed it has diminished slightly, for the tops of the tyres have begun to reappear. Yet we dare not dress ourselves again and our teeth chatter with the cold. If the car should be saved it would be a miracle. . . .

6.30.—The water has descended and now the bonnet is completely uncovered. If it goes on like this we

shall endeavour to start the engine, and if it should still work we are saved. . . .

June 8.—Twelve o'clock! When we arrived at Grodekovo we were received with shouts of joy and the firing of rifles. At ten o'clock some men on horseback, knowing that we had left Nikolsk the previous evening and were going towards the flood, had come to meet and assist us. But when they fell in with us, six versts from the village, we had already got the engine to work and the water was scarcely four inches deep. Now they regard us as raving madmen. But we have done what the Americans did not accomplish, because they did this part of the journey on the railway track. Moreover, we have gained two days upon them. They are now only nine days ahead of us and Pogranitchaya is near.

At three o'clock we started again and at eleven the first lights of Pogranitchaya were shining ahead of us. We entered the village under a deluge of rain and in the midst of indescribable mud. Two or three officers who were still in the streets at that hour of the night came to shake hands with us before we went to bed. For we slept at Pogranitchaya; on a billiard table, it is true, and in the company of many and divers insects and three other personages; but we slept.

To-morrow we shall effect sundry repairs of which the engine stands in need after the adventures of the past night and we shall leave in the afternoon. There is another stretch of flooded country ahead of us. But, forward! and come what may.

## VI

### MANCHURIA

JUNE 9.—The conversation began in an extremely friendly tone—

“Go to the Devil! The Russian telegraph does not accept cypher messages of which the key is not deposited in St. Petersburg.”

It was I who received this pleasant announcement; the speaker was the telegraph operator at Pogranitchaya, and the cypher, alas! was the Italian language. The man, with his dishevelled, tomato-coloured hair, and ferocious eyes gleaming behind eyebrows like the bristles of a tooth-brush, his hands covered with violet ink-stains, had prudently retired behind the window after his lively imprecation, leaving me alone with my telegram, which was stranded against the brass wire screen! I tapped at the window, at first slowly, then, as time passed and my irritation increased, my blows became louder and more frequent. A moujik who was snoring on a bench, and who had been waiting for two days, I believe, for a train, was aroused by the noise and raised his head. He thought, perhaps, that the train had arrived. Then, when he discovered that everything was quiet except myself, and that the train was still about a week late, he fell asleep again. Exasperated and furious, I resumed my knocking, accompanying the blows with a choice flori-



legium from all the vocabularies of the world, determined to get the window open at all costs. Finally it opened. The great head with its ruddy bush was pushed outside.

“Who are you, what do you want, and why do you make all this noise?”

“Who am I and what do I want?” I shouted. “Are you a telegraph operator, or not?”

“Yes, and a most worthy operator, I may add,” he replied, with a certain amount of authority in his voice.

“Very well. I present to you, most worthy operator, this message of 1921 words, written in Italian, to be transmitted to Italy.”

“Italian? Italian? First of all, what is Italian?”

I shivered.

“Italian, my worthy sir, is a very well known language which is spoken in Italy, a country which enjoys a constitutional monarchy, a liberal government, two Chambers, an army, navy, macaroni . . .”

“Ah, yes, yes, macaroni. I remember, the country of macaroni.”

✓The evocation of the kitchen had made an impression upon his great mind ✓and he immediately became humble and meek.

“As you please,” I added. “Italian is the language which is spoken in this country and it is the language in which this telegram is written, so it appears that all difficulties have been overcome, and you can transmit the message.”

“Ah, is that what you propose?”

“I do not *propose*: I wish, and I wish that it should be sent at once, so that it shall arrive at Turin about midnight.”

The name of the Piedmontese town appears to have opened a limitless horizon before him, for he bent down for an instant beneath his desk on which he was leaning his elbows, and came up again with a book all thumb-marked and dog-eared.

“Did you say Torino?”

“Torino, Torino.”

He turned over the leaves two or three times from beginning to end, chanting, “Torino—Torino—Torino. Here it is, Torino, in Texas, United States of America, 3 roubles 23 copecks a word. Why did you want to talk about Italy?”

“But it is not Texas; it is Torino, in Italy.”

“My dear sir, I do not know what to say to you. I am not obliged to know all the villages of the same name which it has pleased the good God to disseminate over the face of the earth. The tariff book speaks clearly enough, and I recognise only one Torino—in Texas, as I have told you. It is my duty, sir, my duty. If your telegram can go to Texas we can continue our discussion. Otherwise I must ask you to leave and to take the treasures of your eloquence elsewhere.”

“Excuse me, but you are wrong to place such blind faith in that dirty book, written by goodness only knows whom. Torino is a great, ancient, celebrated town . . .”

His lips opened into a slight smile, displaying his yellow teeth, and then, because the ideas of food were the only ones which seemed to find an entrance into his brain, I risked timidly—

“They make vermouth there.”

“Ah, I understand now; but if you pronounce the names of towns so badly nobody can understand you. It is Turin; Turin, not Torino.”

“As you please,” I replied, ready for anything so long as the telegram was despatched.

He took up the book again, turned over the leaves, and finally cried in triumph—

“Here it is; here it is. Turin in Italy, 2 roubles 53 copecks a word!”

“That is to say, fcs. 6.75 a word. But that is very dear. From Vladivostock it costs less than a rouble, and Vladivostock is further away.”

“But you forget that Vladivostock is in Siberia and that Pograditchaya is in China, and China, my dear sir, is an uncivilised country.”

“And naturally I must pay for civilising it. Never mind. What is the cost?”

“One moment; who has told you that your message will be transmitted? So far you have only demonstrated that the name of the town is that of a town existing in Italy, but nothing more. So far as regards the text of the message, it is my duty, until I receive a clear and shining demonstration to the contrary, to believe that it is a message in cipher.”

“Demonstrate that? But how?” I ask, in desperation.

“Why, by bringing here a person in whom I can trust, who will affirm on his honour as a gentleman that this is written in a spoken language and not in cipher, and who will be able to say whether it is Italian or not. Pograditchaya is a large place. Go and look round.”

And the window was closed. I went out, boiling with anger. At the Gostinitza they laugh in my face; at the shop of Messrs. Kunst and Albers, which is the emporium of the country, they know nothing of anything; the starosta alone, after chasing two or three fragments of recollections across his brain for a couple

of hours, told me that once, many years ago, when he was a child and the houses of Pogranitchaya had not yet decided to clothe their naked mud in blinding whitewash, there had lived in the place an illustrious lady who had passed through the town disseminating happiness. She had come from a mysterious, far-off, unknown country—from India, or Darkest Africa, or Tierra del Fuego—in fact, from a certain place called Genoa, and that in her moments of tenderness or of anger or disgust with the scanty gratitude of mankind, she spoke a strange, sonorous language, said to be Italian. But the avarice of the inhabitants of Pogranitchaya increased, bread became dear, and the good lady was compelled to take a third-class ticket and emigrate towards Kamschatka. It was thus that Italian had passed through Pogranitchaya, but at the present moment the starosta did not know what advice to give me. He knew nobody in the country who knew Italy. But it would be possible to find somebody who could affirm that they knew it . . . a little recompense, naturally. . . . For example, the druggist or the bell-ringer, or the poor cripple who was stationed on the steps of the church, or the beadle of the school; they were all persons who enjoyed the confidence of the telegraphist.

I decided in favour of the druggist, who, for five roubles and my word of honour that I was not telling him lies, consented to affirm whatever I wished. The pharmacy was closed in sign of festivity, because never, not even in times of the worst epidemic, had he earned so much in a single day.

The telegraph office was deserted when we returned. The moujik was still sleeping in expectation of the train, and my operator also had his head resting on his

crossed arms behind the window. He woke up on hearing us enter, stretched himself for a moment, rubbed his eyes, wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and then looked at our little group.

“Oh, the starosta and the druggist. . . . To what do I owe this honour? . . . Ah, you here again?”

“Yes, and these gentlemen have come with me about the telegram. They are ready to testify . . .”

“Yes, sir,” replied the two personages quickly.

“. . . that the telegram which I present to you for the third time is written in Italian, a language spoken in Italy, and is not in any secret cipher.”

“Yes, sir,” they continued.

“And will they be ready to sign it?” the operator asked.

The starosta and the druggist looked at me interrogatively out of the tail of their eyes. A signature for five roubles! It was rather much. Then they made up their minds and replied—

“We are ready.”

They signed on the margin in incomprehensible hieroglyphics, then the starosta saluted me and disappeared. I remained alone with the infernal operator.

“Now,” I began, “the telegram can go. Will you kindly tell me how much?”

“That is soon done. It will cost 4859 roubles 10 copecks.”

“Good. Do you accept cheques on the Russo-Chinese Bank?”

“But why do you want to pay me? You must understand that your telegram cannot go.”

A sudden idea of homicide leapt into my brain and took possession of it. I wanted to strangle him.

“Why not? What other difficulty is there? You want to drive me mad to-day.”

“If, my dear sir,” he resumed, with an Olympic calm which exasperated me, “if you had only allowed me to speak, I should have told you from the first that I cannot telegraph in Latin characters for the simple reason that I do not understand them.”

“This is impossible. The office of Pogranitchaya, as a tablet which is hung up here says, accepts telegrams from abroad written in Latin characters.”

“That is very true, but it only accepts them when the employee who is able to transmit them is present. Now he is not here.”

“Where is this gentleman?”

“He is on holiday. A poor workman has a right to his repose. Russia, as you will admit, is a civilised and progressive country.”

“I am profoundly convinced of it. But can't he be found and asked as a special favour? . . . I will pay him for the trouble.”

“First the permission of the Director is necessary.”

“And where is the Director?”

“In the country. To-day is St. Prosdocimo, a great Russian feast, and the Director is on holiday.”

“But there must be a secretary or vice-something or other, who directs affairs.”

“No, sir.”

“But can he be found to-morrow?”

“To-morrow is St. Nicodemus, another great feast. The day after to-morrow is St. Pancracius, and no office in Russia is open.”

“So that . . .”

“So that you have some chance of finding him next

week ; on Monday or Friday, because the other days are feast days.”

“ And my telegram will remain here . . . ”

“ At least until Monday next. Unless you are willing to reduce it to just proportions.”

“ What do you mean by ‘ just proportions ’ ? ”

“ Why, twenty words.”

“ Impossible.”

“ Well then, leave it here. It is well not to be in a hurry. Things done after careful thought always succeed best.”

“ Well, if I should reduce it, for instance, to twenty words. Who would transmit it ? ”

“ Oh, I could do it myself ; I could make a sacrifice and work hard. But for more than twenty words it is impossible.”

“ Listen. Cannot you, as a favour, make an effort, and get as far as two hundred words ? ”

“ Impossible.”

“ One hundred, at least.”

“ Absolutely not more than thirty.”

“ Well then, let us divide the difference. It shall be sixty.”

“ Very well ; seeing that you want it so much.”

“ Good. How much have I to pay for sixty words ? About 150 roubles, I believe.”

“ No, less than that, because personally I am not authorised to transmit the message to Italy. I shall send it to Vladivostock, and Vladivostock will despatch it to Italy ; so you will merely pay the cost of transmission to Vladivostock and the receiver that from Vladivostock to Turin. Is that all right ? ”

“ As you please.”

And this is Russified China!

June 10.—It was impossible to proceed yesterday evening because the repairs were only finished during the night. Hence we started this morning at daybreak, along the railway line, because the road was absolutely impracticable. The Administration of the Manchurian Railway, to whom we telegraphed yesterday, has given us permission to travel along the railway, accompanied from station to station by an engineer and followed by a trolley with four coolies, a telephonist with a field telephone, two navvies, and a guard. As at Omaha, we have been provided with red and green lamps, red and green flags, and signalling bombs. The going is every bit as difficult as it was at Omaha, owing to the dilapidated condition of the line. The ballast has been washed away from between the sleepers by the rain, and nobody has thought of replacing it, so we proceed by little jumps from sleeper to sleeper.

There are numerous stations and sidings, and the trains which are waiting on them are all fearfully behind time. It is an inferno as regards speed and as regards comfort. The continual bumping, the incessant dance of St. Vitus which has seized both us and the machine, is most exhausting and exasperating. The sun, too, is very hot, and the plain around us is monotonous and sad. . . .

In the evening we stop in a blockhouse where some soldiers are keeping guard against the Chunchuses. Breakfast: a tinned Frankfort sausage which we brought from Vladivostock, tea, eggs, vodka, black bread. . . .

June 11.—We started early, but by midday had not gone very far. As we proceed slowly towards Kharbin



the line gradually becomes worse. The rain must have been more violent in this part of the country or the carelessness of men greater, for the line is in a terrible state. Some sleepers are missing here and there, and the damage to the line is so great that it is necessary to get twenty or thirty Chinese labourers to repair it before we can proceed. The coolies dismount and unload from their trolley long planks, which they place across the rails and make a sort of pontoon over which the car can pass. As soon as the wheels have passed over one plank the coolies pick it up and lay it down ahead. This goes on for one or two miles, the car stopping at every six or eight yards. But when the break in the line is too great and would require too much time for its repair, we seek a road across the plain, returning to the railway track as soon as a practicable stretch is found.

Naturally all these manoeuvres lose us a tremendous amount of time and cost us enormous fatigue, the sun and the heat being almost insupportable.

At two o'clock we stop in the station at Moulin to replenish our stock of petrol and to stand for a moment in the shade. There was a buffet in the station and we had a passable lunch: herb soup, rancid milk, the flesh of some pachyderm, and black bread.

After Moulin we do not continue along the railway. It would take too long and be too fatiguing. We prefer to cross the mountains, and all the more readily because a moujik has guaranteed to guide us to Kanda-o-Kontse. The railway convoy will await us at Daiimago, a little station somewhere along the line, where the mountain road, traced out by the woodcutters who go to the forest to procure fuel for the trains, once

more joins the railway track. At the outset the road was good, but when it dived into the forest of great pine trees it became horribly muddy and broken. And it rapidly grew worse and worse. We followed it as long as possible, until we were hung up in a layer of mud about a foot deep. It was soft, watery mud in which the car could not proceed. We were immersed up to our springs for two whole hours, and should have remained there for several hours more if we had not, almost by force, compelled some Chinese woodcutters to harness their horses to the Züst and drag it out of the morass. The four horses were scarcely sufficient, together with our united strength, to get the car out of its difficulty.

About three miles further on we were again in a mud hole; and this happened time after time. At last we were compelled to abandon the road and clamber along the mountain, proceeding at a walking pace behind the guide. Haaga was steering and I followed on foot. Towards five o'clock, tired of these continual gymnastics, we tried to get on the railway line again, but the track was broken. So we stopped, utterly unable to proceed any further owing to our exhaustion. The guide went on foot to Daii-mago in search of assistance while Haaga and I dozed upon the car. . . .

At eleven o'clock we were aroused by a sound of numerous voices. They were those of the men who had been summoned by the guide. Our labours began again, planks being laid down for the car to pass over, then carried on ahead. It was a constant succession of starts and stops every few yards. We reached Daii-mago at one o'clock in the morning.

June 12.—We did not leave this morning, but we rose, as always, at daybreak. The water was not cir-

culating in the radiator, and the engine, compelled to work perpetually on the first speed, got heated. We had to change the pump, and while Haaga was working I went in search of China. . . . I did not find it. The Russians have succeeded in creating a void around themselves. As the line has advanced towards the sea the towns and the native populations have fled towards the north and south. ✓The Russians have changed everything wherever their boots have trodden the earth, and have wiped out every native characteristic. ✓So along this Chinese line, built on Chinese soil, the stations are Russian, the employees are Russian, the towns are Russian. Chinese only are the fantastic names of the stations, and the dragons embroidered in silver on the caps of the employees, and the coolies who work on the line. For the rest, China is far off, undiscoverable, fled before the invasion. ✓Everybody speaks in Russian, curses in Russian, gets drunk on Russian poisons, and eats *à la Russe*. ✓

At two o'clock we start again, but not along the line. The station-master guarantees that the road is good enough. He merely warns us that it passes through a forest which is dangerous on account of the Chunchuse brigands.

On the whole this announcement afforded us a certain amount of pleasure. We have been travelling for a long time across the world in search of a warlike adventure, and to-day when the opportunity of one is offered we cannot feel otherwise than gratified. But we experience a certain amount of anxiety and some impatience. Were we not told at Vladivostock so many terrible things about the ferocity of the Chunchuses, who go about in bands of 20,000—so we were

told—commanded, not by a Chinese generalissimo, but by Russian lieutenants, who are perfectly organised, have batteries of artillery, engineers, pontoon sections, telegraphists, and balloonists? Some of the authorities said that our expected arrival was known amongst the thieves in the mountains, who, for a month past, had been polishing up their knives and lances for the detriment of our pockets and skins. And there are men amongst them who for a month or so have been meeting together and reading dusty old Chinese MSS. so as to revive from their pages the delicious principles which govern the science of artistic butchery. There are red-hot irons waiting for us, melted lead for our ears, dissections to be conducted with real ability and wisely directed slowness. Then there are pits dug in the midst of the road and covered with leaves, into which our car will fall; nails have been sewn along the roads in millions, and bridges cut. There are, moreover, tigers, the ferocious Manchurian tigers, as numerous as mosquitoes or the sands of the sea, tigers that have been made voracious by two years of famine. . . .

Our heads were full of all these terrible possibilities when we left Vladivostock.

So with our rifles ready loaded and our eyes constantly on the look out for a hidden enemy, we departed from Daii-mago, feeling a little emotion, which was, of course, a long, long way removed from fear.

The road was good, or almost good. We have by now become so accustomed to give the name of "road" to any stretch of ground along which the car can travel for at least half an hour without meeting too many obstacles, that to find a path cut up at every thirty yards into ditches and covered with stones and branches of trees

means that we have found a fairly good road. Our first Manchurian road is of this description. It is narrow, passes between the branches of an immense forest, goes up and down hill at terrible gradients, is full of twists and all sorts of contortions, but it is a road along which the car can travel slowly and cautiously, bouncing on its springs, but still advancing and destroying one after the other each of the 12,000 miles which still separate us from Paris. All around is dense forest. The sun, which glows high in the heavens, does not reach the path along which we travel, as it is held up in the dense foliage, but here and there, when there is a sudden break in the trees, it reaches us like a torrent of molten lead. The sand of the road then shines for a few moments in an insupportable manner. When the leaves join up again, the light is attenuated, and the forest continues.

But the Chunchuses are still missing. Where are the pits bristling with knives at the bottom and covered with leaves? Where are the atrocious tortures? Why do not they take us in the depths of this fantastic Paradou, where the verdure is so thick that it would stifle the noise of battle or the shouts of an assassination? It is certainly further along that they are waiting for us, behind that enormous rock, or in that clump of trees, or beneath that wooden bridge. . . . But a great lizard scuttles away from behind the rock as we approach, birds are chattering gaily in the trees, and a peaceful Manchu boy is washing himself under the bridge. . . . We shall meet the Chunchuses towards sunset at night. So we proceed onwards with anxious minds and all our armoury ready.

Soon the forest comes to an end and we pass through a series of villages at one of which we stop to obtain

water for the radiator. The inhabitants flee in terror and watch us with diffidence from little windows and behind half-closed doors. I advance to parley, waving a silver rouble over my head. Some windows and doors are opened. At last my vigorous gesticulations, which may be interpreted as signals of generosity, induce one man to detach himself from a timorous group. He is dressed from head to foot in white, or at least, in something that was white at the dawn of its existence, but which now, after many strange adventures, has formed an ignominious alliance with every kind of stain and smudge that is blackest. This indescribable garment—something like a blouse—is tied at the waist by a girdle which was black originally. The man's pigtail does not exist or is a very meagre one, and he has a sparse, hairy vegetation on his chin. In his face, which is the colour of burnt sienna, his eyes are invisible. They are black slits rather than eyes, and his nose makes only a very tentative appearance.

This important personage takes two or three steps towards me with his eyes fixed on the rouble. Then he makes a profound reverence with his arms crossed upon his breast. He frankly extends his hands; the rouble retires into my pocket, much to his surprise and irritation. At last, by means of a hundred complicated gestures, he is made to understand that the money is not merely a reward for his arrival, but that we require some water. He turns to the silent crowd, and in a voice full of anger and fury hurls at them a stream of violent invective. The men listen with bowed heads as the tempest passes over them. Then some ten or twenty hurry off, and an instant later there is a row of pails beside the car. The chief—for

he certainly is a chief—regards me with a smile full of satisfaction, and points to my pocket in which the rouble has disappeared, and to his own, in which it would find a grateful resting-place.

While Haaga takes from one of the pails the small quantity of water that he requires, the people become more courageous, and approach the car, watching it with their little eyes wide open with astonishment. They are guided by a youth whose head is wrapped in an enormous handkerchief, and whose feet are lost in a tremendous pair of soleless riding-boots, the gift, possibly, of some friendly Cossack. This new personage appears also to enjoy much authority in the land, because the crowd listens with patient attention to his vivacious discourse, which is punctuated every now and again by eloquent and convincing arm-play. He must have been a railway stoker, and he explains the working of the mysterious dragon. . . .

Gradually the young Manchurian approaches the tyres, and with grim resolution touches them with a finger. The crowd is struck dumb with admiration. He takes another step and fingers the lamps; something like a shiver passes over the crowd. A third step and he touches the radiator; but unfortunately for him it was still hot, and the experimental scientist burnt his hand. The crowd flees like a herd of surprised antelopes. Soon, however, they return, under the persuasions of the more courageous stoker, and themselves touch the pneumatics, which fill them with wonder, make grimaces before the lenses of the lamps, which turn their images upside down, and finally, one by one, conscientiously burn their fingers on the radiator.

At last Haaga starts the engine, and we are off again, while the bearded personage bows a respectful farewell.

We pass through villages and woods and flowery meadows and across rivers, but we do not meet the Chunchuses. We get close to Kanda-o-Kontze, a great town odiously full of Russian boots and Russian functionaries and Russian insects ; but the Chunchuses do not make their appearance. But it was night when we arrived, and the woods were dark. However, Manchuria is large, and the providence of God infinite. Let us hope.

For the moment, sitting in the station, we consoled ourselves, like Tartarin of Tarascon at the defence of the monastery of Pamperigouste—the attack will come to-morrow.

June 13.—Again to-day we endeavoured to take our way across the country rather than along the railway track, but it was impossible. At the first ten yards across the tall grass we fell into a moving savannah. These savannahs are terrible. They are formed of a layer of thick, wet grass woven solidly together, beneath which is a pool of water. It appears to be perfectly solid, and we are into it before we realise the treacherous danger. When once the surface has given way the task of getting out is tremendous. The grass which broke under the weight of the car will bear a man, though it trembles beneath his steps, and it is impossible to use poles or levers. However, with the assistance of about twenty Russian soldiers, we got out of the difficulty after hours and hours of hard work. We preferred then to return to the railway line, which was as bad as it could possibly be. In the



evening we stopped at a Russian blockhouse, the men making us sleep in their hammocks and eat their food. There was only one bottle of beer in the place, and it was emptied in our honour!

June 14.—It is still impossible to abandon the railway line because the surrounding country is nothing but a morass. And the line is in a terrible state, almost as impracticable as the country. At midday the telephonist advises us that a train is about to pass and that we must leave the line. He has a portable apparatus furnished with a long pole which he attaches to the telegraph wires in the open country and thus gets into immediate touch with the nearest station. We are able in this manner to maintain continuous and certain communication with those who are directing the movements of the trains along the line, and there is no possibility of a collision.

The little stretch of sand on which we alighted after leaving the rails was close to a river running amidst willows. Haaga and I immediately went to bathe our painful feet in the water, while the guide remained beside the car with the Chinese coolies and the telephonist. After bathing we stretched ourselves under the willows beside the murmuring stream. We jumped up when we heard the guide shouting that somebody was coming. Beside the car were a man, elegantly dressed all in white, and two ladies in light summer costumes, who protected themselves from the sun with silk sunshades. They gazed at the mud-stained Züst with an air of supreme satisfaction.

We, dirty and black to the roots of our hair, looked at the group in astonishment. Is it possible that there are such things as ladies and silk sunshades? Is there

still, in some distant hemisphere, an old country called Europe? . . .

The young man advances and, speaking in French, says—

“I am the Chief of the line between Ymen-po to Aji-chie, and I am happy to present to you my wife and her friend. At the same time I wish to say that I shall be very glad if you will lunch with me. . . .”

I look at my hands and my clothes and then at Haaga.

“But we are in such a terrible state of dirt that it is impossible to accept. You will pardon us, I am sure.”

“When one is making a tour round the world one cannot think of soap. Come, at once.”

“But the train?”

“Oh, the train. That will wait. It is only about a mile from here to Ymen-po, and the train will pass within forty minutes. There is plenty of time.”

We remounted to the track and drove forward. But it was very painful travelling. The wheels of the car sank in between each sleeper and it took two or three minutes to get out. The sun fell perpendicularly over our heads and increased the martyrdom. After half an hour it was impossible to proceed any further. The water was boiling violently in the radiator. Suddenly a voice behind us cried—

“The train! The train! The express!”

A thousand different ideas fly through our heads. Where shall we go? How shall we get out of the rails? Everybody shouts—the coolies, the ladies, the employees—everybody seems to have gone mad. All sorts of suggestions are made, and some one is sent towards the train with a great red flag. But while we

are endeavouring to save ourselves as quickly as possible from the impending disaster, a tongue of flame issues from the engine cover; then another, and another, and another. . . . The car is burning; it is enveloped in a dense smoke.

Haaga and I dismount, forgetting the other danger in the presence of this more pressing one. We take off the bonnet and throw on clothes and furs to extinguish the flames. The smoke is almost asphyxiating. . . . Ah! save it, save it! . . .

The fire is extinguished and the car saved. And we are at table in the house of the railway chief, who tells us, still trembling with emotion, how the train stopped a hundred paces away from us. Then comes the champagne and everything is forgotten. . . .

We started again at three in the afternoon, late, imprudent as ever. But we had no idea that the road would be as bad as it is, nor that it would traverse a forest so dense and so extensive. The people of the country had, indeed, told us that it was madness to abandon the railway line, that the mountains and the woods were wild, and that the Chunchuses. . . . But since we left Vladivostock we have heard so many stories about these gentlemen that we now laugh at their existence, or, at least, are very doubtful about them. If all the dangers are to be summed up in an attack by the Chunchuses, we are certain that no peril exists.

But, as usual, we were wrong. At ten o'clock at night we have not, it is true, come across even the shadow of a brigand, but as a compensation we have fallen into a moving savannah, which extends for 100 yards before us and for 300 on either side. And

we are so well into it that the two wheels on the right side disappear in the layer of mud and grass up to the springs. Thus the car remains, motionless, leaning over on its side. The night is dark, and the nearest village from which we could expect to get the help of men and horses is sixteen versts from this wretched bog. The situation is certainly not a pleasant one, but we must spend the night here while the guide goes on foot to get help from the village. We may be here for six or seven hours.

The guide makes his preparations for battle. He takes a revolver and a rifle, empties a tin of biscuits into his pockets, and then starts. Haaga and I remain alone.

We put up a tent—an old Russian military tent, which lets in water everywhere. The night, however, is comparatively calm, and there is no wind. In the only pot that we possess, over a fire of twigs, I—the official cook of the expedition—prepare supper. It is a meagre repast: two alleged Frankfort sausages, corned beef which resembles shoe leather, and six sardines, which have been miraculously fished up from the depths of an old tin, in which they were swimming about in the oil in the company of two dead locusts. There is also a bottle of Russian beer which has remained over from the orgy of Ymen-po. We empty it with due solemnity in honour of our first night in a Manchurian encampment.

At eleven o'clock the sumptuous repast is finished and Haaga is sleepy. He goes to rest on our old American furs and I keep guard.

It was about three o'clock, and day was beginning to dawn when the sound of a horn reached us across the

wood. It was the guide returning with our rescuers. I replied to him by firing my rifle, so that he could direct himself by the sound. He responded with his horn, and so a sort of conversation was established between the gun and the horn. By five o'clock he was quite close to us, but his direction was uncertain, and his signals approached and receded most capriciously. At length, however, our rescuers arrived, men and horses, to drag us out of the wretched bog. There were some twenty Cossacks on horseback, whom the commander of the post at Oudzimii-kie had sent to haul us out of the mud and escort us across the wild forest. In the village the people were somewhat anxious on our account, and the guide and everybody were greatly relieved to find us still safe and sound beside the car.

The salvage operations were carried out quickly. Trees were cut down and their trunks placed under the wheels, and gradually the car was raised out of the tenacious mud. When its equilibrium was re-established the horses and men were harnessed to it, and it was slowly hauled out of the mire. At last it was high and dry on its four wheels with the motor throbbing once more.

In two groups of ten the Cossacks ranged themselves before and behind the car, and we resumed our journey. We arrived at Oudzimii-kie after traversing marshes, where we had to cut down trees before we were able to pass, and up and down the most infernal hills and hollows.

The population of the dozen houses which comprised the place were nearly all Chinese, and had come to meet us on the road. We entered the village at a gallop, amidst the frenzied shouts of the Cossacks, who

rode around us, and the smoke and noise of their rifles firing a *feu de joie*. And amidst shouts and smoke and a fusillade we left, half an hour later, proceeding towards Agi-kie and Kharbin.

June 15.—It was a short and easy stage which led us to Agi-kie along a good road through a wonderful forest. But at Agi-kie we were held up by a burst tyre and a broken spring. We had to proceed to Kharbin on a railway truck to obtain a new tyre, and returned by night to Agi-kie. We entered Kharbin about noon. A Chinese generalissimo was there to receive us; he was the first Chinese we have seen who was not a porter or a navvy.

## VII

### CONTRASTS IN CLEANLINESS

JUNE 18.—We remained three days at Kharbin repairing the broken spring. The operation was carried out in a railway workshop, but despite all our zeal we were unable to finish inside three days, and this morning we left in the direction of Bockedu—an easy journey across an immense plain.

What pleasant surprises we have had in Manchuria, which we had believed to be so hostile to us! For nine consecutive hours we travelled without a jolt or a jerk, as though we were gliding along a surface of crystal, across an immense, smooth plain teeming with great irises which our wheels cut down in hecatombs. There was not a road of any description. The plain around us was the road, and near and far, amidst the tall grasses there passed Manchurian caravans, lines of low carts with solid wheels studded with nails. Dotted over the verdant plain like reefs in the sea were little Manchurian villages, nestling around red or blue pagodas. They were populated by frightened crowds who stopped their ears and covered their eyes as we passed.

At Tsitsikhar we stopped in an extraordinary Chinese house with a curved roof, inhabited by porcelain dragons, the walls hidden beneath colossal

war trophies. We slept on the floor, wrapped in a cloud of burned incense, and left at daybreak.

June 19.—We were compelled to stop suddenly to-day, when the brown houses of Tsitsikhar had already disappeared in the green plain, before a great cloud of dust which swelled up in dense spirals under the burning sun. We expected to see one of the immense herds of oxen which are continually crossing the road. Gradually the cloud approached us, became thinner, and enfolded us also. There issued from it men, isolated and in groups, dispersed here and there in disorder, like cattle at pasture. They were scattered along and on either side of the road, their arms pendent and limp from the heat; shuffling along in their felt or goatskin sandals. They carried in their hands fans, or fly-flappers, and had on their heads the strangest hats it is possible to imagine, of straw, or felt, or paper. They were clothed in dark-coloured smocks, and wore formidable-looking cartridge belts, and, suspended by a string like a guitar, a rifle, an antiquated spit-fire, jogged on their backs or trailed in the dust. Some seven or eight persons—the officers—with smoked spectacles and fans arabesqued in gold, followed on horses which looked as if they had been trained for the circus. ✓ It was the Chinese army, truly a formidable host, which, armed with fans, was proceeding to substitute a Russian garrison. ✓

We laughed on seeing them pass, but we were wrong, because it was not the fact of these two or three thousand people marching across the fields like schoolboys which was of any significance; what was really significant was the fact that continually, day after day, the Russian army, that formidable engine





MANCHURIA: BUDDHA BY THE ROADSIDE.



MANCHURIA: A BROKEN BRIDGE.

STON  
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which, until four years ago, still weighed heavily on the sleep of Europe, is compelled to give way to this curious herd which flows from all the maritime provinces of the Celestial Empire.

Kirin has been completely evacuated; Kharbin is mourning its abandonment; Tsitsikhar, Khailar—all the pompous Manchurian towns which it has pleased the Russians to people after a sanguinary conquest in order to imprint upon them a tangible sign of their power, are now dead so far as Russia is concerned: evacuated by the soldiers and that numerous band of employees which every good army of the Tsar feels it its duty to trail behind it for some mysterious needs. And into the derelict barracks, into the deserted houses and the neglected offices, China has entered with her formidable “tigers of war,” whose legs are more courageous than their hearts.

✓ Thus ends Russia’s great dream of conquest in the Far East, a conquest which was to place in her hands a whole continent. And the dream is dispelled without hope of return. ✓ One experiences this everywhere—in the insolence of the Chinese, who have begun to bastinado (and with good reason) the little Russian boys, who, ignorant of the altered conditions, will persist in hanging curious objects to the tips of pigtails; in the obstinate resurrection beside the Russian churches, now without saints and without priests, of elegant pagodas built of the precious wood which heretofore had served the Cossacks for warming their hands; in the absolute and unexpected confidence with which the Chinese have brought back into the towns their young women, who, as a measure of prudence, had been taken into the distant country.

Death is everywhere—in the empty houses, in the closed shops, in the abandoned gardens. It is a disaster, a precipitous flight, a pitiful exodus and migration of the birds of prey who had alighted here to build a nest in the nests of others. There remain only some 20,000 soldiers in Manchuria at the present moment, 20,000 men who are not so much soldiers as railway police, platelayers, signalmen, and engine-drivers. They are very melancholy in this country, which has suddenly become hostile, and amidst a people who now speak to them with little ironical smiles at the corners of their lips, and who have high voices and right in every dispute. They feel that they are intruders here; they are tolerated on this little piece of Manchurian soil which still belongs to them, but only for a little while, for they are destined to depart on a day not far distant, when also this outpost of empire shall be taken from Russia. . . .

It was night when we arrived at Khailar.

June 20.—At last we have found the real China. We slept at Khailar at a Chinese inn, malodorous, as is natural, but cheerful and joyous. We ate badly and slept worse on matting<sup>v</sup> which swarmed with nameless pests.<sup>v</sup> The waiter was Chinese, clothed, as all the Chinese are, in a blue smock buttoned on the left shoulder. The proprietor was a Chinese with a pigtail folded in an artistic mass on the top of his shaven crown, a thief like all the Chinese; the tea was Chinese—that is to say, green and undrinkable, full of pounded laurel leaves and other refuse, like all Chinese tea. This morning, profiting by the urgent need of repairs to the car—the chassis having broken once more yesterday just before we reached Khailar—our worthy host piloted us in a tour round the town.

There is a substantial difference between the Chinese and the Japanese. It consists in the matter of cleanliness. ✓The habit of washing oneself and washing the house which one inhabits is, in my opinion, a racial distinction more pronounced and marked than any physical difference. ✓ In order that the sense of cleanliness, and the necessity for it, may become a racial instinct, a certain special inclination of the mind is necessary from which this common sentiment can spring up. The Chinese have not got this sense of cleanliness, or at least they do not possess it so far as regards the surroundings in which they live. ✓The Chinese man, the Chinese who travels along the road, is always highly polished, with his pigtail plaited to the point with threads of silk, with a gown that is always new, with felt boots that are always clean ; but the Chinese at home and the house in which he lives are things so disgustingly odorous as to render approach impossible for any European. ✓ The Japanese is proud of and loves his house, his flowers, and his lake. He would polish the sky which curves over his roof every morning in order to make it more shining. But not so the Chinese. He does not love his house, does not respect it. He does not consider that the house is worthy of any particular regard or care. He lives there—that is all.

Are not these signs of race? For my own part I believe they are. The love of home, the love of the things among which one lives, are to my thinking, like all altruistic inclinations, a sign of intellectual inferiority, understanding the word intellectual in its restricted sense as the creative or imaginative power in contradistinction to the speculative and vivisectioning

faculty which belongs to the races of which I am speaking—the Japanese, the German, the Turk. ✓ All the races of action, the races which like to watch the play of muscle under the skin, and who, on action alone, have laid the foundation of their grandeur, display this jealous love of the house and the things around them which they make part of their life. ✓ They would seem to be unable to look beyond the ring of the horizon in front of their eyes. They are unable to peer into the future, but see only the present, and find all their joy in tangible reality. And it is this reality which they strive to make better and more brilliant.

The imaginative people, the dreamers, are constitutional egoists; they love and cannot help loving their own persons projected into the future; they travel through life with their eyes fixed before them, and they are unable to look back or to either side. For them the house has no value except as a place of repose in which their strength for journeying onward is renewed. It is a place of transition, like the marsh to the migratory duck, or the posting-station to a traveller. For the others the house is a fulcrum, a pivot on which their life turns. For the one it is a thing, for the others a whole; for one it is a stage, for the others a life. If one thinks that cleanliness is a consequence of this affection and uncleanness the result of indifference, one will come to a curious conclusion from all these premises. ✓ It is that, strange as it seems, filth is a state of progress, cleanliness a state of stagnation, and that the Chinese people are continually marching onwards, while the Japanese have been stagnant for a century. ✓ *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

But apart from all this a Chinese town is a delicious

thing to see. The women are duller than those of Japan, but the men are finer, more elegant, more intelligent. The streets with their variegated signboards are very fine; the houses, encrusted with porcelain and surmounted by dragons, are beautiful; and the shops, loaded with strange and evil-smelling things, are enchanting. √A Chinese town smells horribly; but it amuses and fascinates.√ Perhaps this is precisely because it smells, which would seem to indicate that the seat of the sense of beauty is in the nostrils. But this would be difficult to demonstrate, and I shall not make the attempt.

We left Khailar in the evening. We had our lamps lighted, and made a great noise in the narrow populous streets, stinking with crayfish fried in certain unknown and deadly fats. But nobody turned to look at us. Indeed, a rickshaw which preceded us and blocked our passage did not even deign to draw aside and give way to us. It continued trotting tranquilly ahead until it reached its destination.

In the shops a merchant would reluctantly raise his head from a table upon which he was depicting mysterious signs, then lower it again with a petulant air of annoyance at our invasion. √There was not a sign of curiosity, not a gesture of wonder or fear.√ And yet, without any doubt, it was the first time that this people had seen one of these terrible fire-spitting dragons rushing along their narrow streets and frightening the chickens and the pigs. It might be said that they were old, old men looking on, ironically and sceptically, at the extravagances of their grandchildren, and at things which, for us the latest conquests of civilisation, they had thought of and known for ages,

and had not made because they were convinced of their uselessness.

We were mortified by this, and our sense of civilisation, which had been walking abroad with a triumphal air, hid its face in its hands.

June 21.—Disasters, disasters without end! In the first place, it has begun to rain. In the second place, as we approached the Khingan Mountains, the road has gradually become worse and worse. The steppe, blue with irises and rosy with pagodas, has come to a sudden end, and is succeeded by great inextricable forests of firs, flanking the sides of little hills that we, the proud conquerors of the Rocky Mountains, would despise if it were not for the mud. In some places the trees are so thick that we cannot proceed without cutting some of them down, and the mud is so deep that six times during the night and the day we have been obliged to work with our poles and levers. Then there were broken bridges, rivers which had overflowed their banks, precipitous descents, and mosquitoes without end. After travelling twenty-four hours through all these torments we stop at a mountain “izba” about fifteen miles from Khailar, where there lived an old bearded moujik. Evidently we have reached the end of China.

June 22.—Again a very bad journey to-day. Rain and trees, trees and rain without end. Hence we proceed very slowly. And to fill up our cup of happiness we have broken two springs, sprung a leak in the petrol reservoir by bumping against a rock, lost a wheel. Oh, Siberia!

June 23.—We reached Nertchinsk in the forenoon, and stopped to repair the damage sustained during our



first two days of Siberia. It is a horrible town naturally, built of tree trunks and mud. The men are wearisome and antipathetic, and the food is terrible. We shall leave to-morrow. But to-day's journey was relatively easy since the morning. Having crossed the Khingan Mountains, the steppe, violet with irises and fragrant with lilies of the valley, has begun again. Only, instead of pagodas there were izbas, and it was raining. . . .

## VIII

### TRANSBAIKALIA

JUNE 24.—At dawn this morning we bade farewell at Nertchinsk to Manchuria. It was already hidden from our sight by a cloud of dust. Beside a painted boundary post a somnolent soldier was pretending to keep guard. Beyond the post, beyond the soldier, and beyond Manchuria the same violet plain stretched towards the distant skyline, the same “izbas” smoked in the transparent morning air, and the same innumerable pigs scattered before our noisy approach, regardless of the frontier. We proceeded serenely along also without noticing the same particular. So many races, so many countries have already disappeared behind our backs, so much of the earth has passed under our wheels, that our power of vision has been enlarged and extended, and our eyes can embrace the whole of our journey and reduce it to a track—a white ribbon 25,000 miles long, stretched across six races, three continents, and a meridian. And the land is so similar to itself everywhere: green with the same green, flowered with the same flowers, indifferent to the tracks laboriously cut out by man.

Spent entirely in gliding along the smooth surface of the plain in chase of the horizon, without a shock or a stop, our first day in Transbaikalia was an empty one. There was the most complete solitude around us; there

was not a man, not a house; only the painted posts telling the tale of verst after verst.

Towards eleven o'clock at night we stopped in an izba, stranded, so to speak, in the green plain. An old man with a long beard and mistrustful eyes served us with tea, and as he closed the door behind him he made the sign of the cross.

June 25.—The desert. An agreeable desert, not harsh or harassing, but flowered with irises and lilies. Across it galloped the herds of horses of the Buriats, the little Mongolian horsemen who have been assimilated by Russia. It is a desert only by reason of its vastness and the absence of villages, for it is inhabited by a whole race of mild, tranquil shepherds. ✓ I have never been able to understand why it is that the peoples of Asia in general should be so substantially different one from the other. ✓ They have had, more or less, the same antiquity. They have had their origin in the same source, and yet none of them have travelled through life with equal step. Some, like the Chinese, have got ahead of the rest, and even of ourselves to some extent; others, like the Indians and Tibetans, have reached the sublimation of the speculative faculties, and in them and in the theological doctrines derived from them they have become crystallised; others again, like the Siberians, have remained behind, only some four or five steps in advance of the early representatives of the human race who fashioned axes out of flints and lances from pointed thorns; others still, like the true Mongolians and the Kirghese, have remained still further behind, in the most remote pastoral epoch, only two or three stages ahead of the cave dwellers. The same centuries have passed over their heads, the same

sun has shone on their history, they have almost the same physical characteristics, and yet oceans separate them. So it is with these Buriats. Without doubt they issued from the same matrix as the Chinese, of whom, indeed, they are probably the elder brothers; without doubt they are of the same flesh and the same blood, but never was difference greater or more complete, never division more clear and precise, never diversity more radical and decisive. The Chinese people have *lived*. Not so the Buriats. After all the ages that have passed over their heads the Chinese have reached the present day with their hands full and with a civilisation perfected by a thousand years. The Buriats, on the other hand, have arrived with their hands empty, with their minds void of remembrance and aspirations. They are breeders of cattle and horses, like the earliest founders of their race. The Chinese have grown up, the Buriats have remained children.

It is known that the pastoral epoch was one of transition between the age of the cave dwellers and that of the matriarchate, which was the first form of human society. Hence it is antecedent to the era of agriculture. The Buriats have remained precisely in this epoch of transition; they are shepherds and nomads, without centralisation, without society, and almost without houses. It is possible that they have taken one step in advance, because, in the Mongolian Desert, which extends almost from one end of Transbaikalia to the other, there can be seen some agglomeration, some attempt at concentration. They are, it is true, all shepherds, and agriculture is unknown to them, but they are not all nomads. There are very many of them who, having chosen a suitable

pasturage, have settled there, and collected their flocks, begun to live in community, and ended by adding plaster and mud to their huts, and forming encampments—an embryo town. But the greater part of them have remained nomads, living always on horseback, crossing the desert without any fixed purpose and in no certain direction, following the slow steps of their herds, constructing their dwellings where the grass was most inviting and destroying them when the pasture had become exhausted. They have the same uncompromising Buddhism as the Tibetans, but their lamas still travel behind the herds on horseback, dressed in yellow instead of blue like all the Buriats, and their temples are the prayer mills and little branches of trees rising from a heap of stones erected by some mysterious believer, to which each one of the faithful who passes adds a ribbon or a strip of paper for every prayer that he says. They live on milk, eggs, and tea, and are rich.

We met a whole caravan of them to-day crossing the desert. The women, indistinguishable from the men, travel on horseback if they are young, or in light carts if they are old. And they watch our noisy passage with terrified eyes. The men follow us, bending over the necks of their horses.

June 27.—Tchita! Tchita! It is a metropolis, so our guide tells us; a vast assembly of white houses cowering in a valley at the foot of a mountain of gold, a metropolis which has six years of a past and a hundred years of future. It sprouted from the earth under the foot of a miner in a day not far distant. Here, as at Ely, as at Goldfield and Greenwater in America, the first hut was the foundation-stone, the

mother cell around which a thousand or so other huts, each sheltering a similar number of visionaries, soon collected. And rapidly, under the violent impulse of avidity, the city arose like a fungus after a rain-storm in summer, extending its boundaries every day, stretching its long arms of stone over the plain, conquering the mountain, clambering up its sides, finally imposing on it the weight of its pretentious architecture and covering the wooden skeletons of the primitive houses with stucco. Tchita is six years old to-day, and is the largest town in Transbaikalia; within fifty years it will certainly be one of the largest in Siberia; but within a hundred years, still more certainly, it will be a ruin. For nothing is less solid than these walls which have been hastily erected on the open lap of earth. When the veins in the mountains on which it has settled like a branch of mistletoe on an oak shall become exhausted and dried up, when it shall have sucked all their blood, it will die the death of the trunk to which it is attached. As rapidly as they were born the stuccoed houses will fall to pieces, and the wood will appear behind the lime and plaster, the grass will return from the distant plain to reconquer its former possessions, and the opulent lady who now shines with a thousand brilliants in the buffet of the station amidst a pyramid of multi-coloured bottles of poison will disappear, carried away like a dry leaf by the destroying wind. And death will enter Tchita. This busy metropolis, this town which has risen in a day, will set in an hour, like one of those shining stars which live in the sky scarcely long enough to formulate a desire. . . .

At the moment the metropolis, despite the gilt

and stucco palaces, despite the innumerable triumphal arches, has not yet learned how to cook. We ate some terrible food in a most pretentious "Grand Hotel," with round windows, imposing doors, and walls blooming with a Botticellian spring. . . . But it was only Rabelais who pretended that the grandeur of a people was enclosed in its cooking-pots.

At eleven o'clock at night, after a good journey, we stopped under the broken roof of a deserted house in the midst of a forest. Clouds of mosquitoes buzzed around us.

June 29.—The going has been wonderful to-day along a somewhat sandy track through a dense forest, in the midst of which the mere trace of a road wound capriciously. Amidst the trees the solitude was complete. Now and again there was a little village nestling around the church with a green cupola, at the door of which a patriarchal old man was watching. Sometimes we would be accompanied by a shouting herd of Mongolians riding furiously on the bare backs of their horses, or we would pass a slow procession of blue-eyed Russian women on horseback, in short red petticoats, their feet hidden in great boots, their heads bound in red turbans. And then the forest and solitude again.

Three hundred versts to-day.

June 30.—Owing to one of the stupid, ridiculous incidents which are the joy of the pedestrian but the curse of the automobilist, we are held up once more.

For the want of a drop of oil we are fixed here in the midst of a wild forest full of mosquitoes, under a heavy hail-storm, in the midst of an assembly of Mongolians who, in their curious language, discuss with extraordinary gravity the celestial punishment which has

suddenly fallen upon us, and which is still sonorously rumbling in the sky and among the tops of the trees.

We remain with our backs turned to the storm for three or four hours waiting for Haaga, who has gone towards the next village on horseback in search of oil. Beside us, seated under the trees of the forest, some Buriats—a whole caravan of men and women—await, as we do, the end of the tempest and shout in chorus mysterious words to exorcise the thunder which bursts in the sky.

Haaga returns towards six o'clock, when the sun was already sinking on the horizon and the sky had cleared. With a countenance full of bitterness he announces that in the neighbouring country there was no other oil except that for the Singer sewing machines. He had collected the whole of it—thirty small bottles—and this he carried like a ciborium, carefully wrapped in his mackintosh. It was at least sufficient to put life into our motor once more. But it was only a short life, for six versts further on, in the noble Mongolian town of Kourga, we were again compelled to stop. But at Kourga there were at least houses and fellow-men.

July 1.—Last night seated on the ground in the only room of a Mongolian house under the bovine and paternal eyes of a wooden smoke-blackened Buddha, before a steaming samovar, and in the centre of a respectful circle of men and women who patiently watched us devouring their supper, we laughed at the incident which had caused us to hasten by a few hours our evening halt; but to-day after the oil had arrived we laughed still more. The motor, quite exceptionally, refused at first to awake from its nocturnal sleep.



Finally, however, it began to work, but slowly, and with a great rattling as of loose iron. We were compelled to stop it for fear of worse.

And now in the great courtyard full of spectators and pigs its members are dispersed in disorder, and this machine which has already conquered so much of the earth, and has so much still to conquer, is reduced to a thousand small pieces amidst which the eyes lose their sight without being able to construct a complete and living image. Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps in two days, it might palpitate with life again. A bearing has fused owing to want of lubrication, and as we have not a spare one a new one must be made. Without speaking, as is his usual custom, Haaga patiently sets to work.

“Will you have to cast one?” I inquire.

“I shall cast it,” he replies, shrugging his shoulders impatiently, irritated by a question which he regards as quite superfluous. And he continues to work serenely.

From a lump of mud he makes a mould round the bronze skeleton of the bearing. With the file he smooths the piece of wood which is to occupy the centre. From the lid of a tin box of cough lozenges he cuts pieces which shall aid perfect fusion. And then, in an old iron spoon, over a fire of newspapers and pieces of a broken door, he melts half a dozen leaden bullets and cuttings from the bottom of a zinc pail. I watch him, wonder-struck. The metal liquefies and the strange mixture is poured into the mould. Then with sharp files he begins to trim and smooth the casting. . . .

At five o'clock in the morning the motor breathes once more. It seems to me to be a miracle.

July 2.—Verkne-Udinsk! It appeared suddenly in the midst of a clearing in the fir trees among which we were travelling, stretched out on the mud of a river—the Uda—like a promised land or a desired paradise. And yet how far removed from Paradise is this Verkne-Udinsk, this mean borough of thirty houses and a church, where the herds of oxen eat the geraniums in the low windows and the pigs are complete masters of the road. But the saddening effect of innumerable hours passed in watching the trees hastening past us with their arms stretched towards the east, the melancholy of those terrible hours in which no noise except that of the motor reaches our ears, the absence of a man or a horse on the motionless line of the horizon for day after day and mile after mile, have such a depressing effect upon the mind that any collection of houses, of persons or animals, which relieves us of the nightmare and recalls to mind other living things around us is always a source of joy. Thus it is to-day, as at Ogden, after the tremendous crossing of the Rocky Mountains, that here in this modest little town we stare in wonder at the green-shuttered windows, at the women assembled in the market-place listening to the wailings of a band, ourselves seated in a café before some iced lemonade that has been prepared for us. There is very little, practically nothing of what we call civilisation in Europe. But there is a certain voice which speaks to us of cleanliness, of comfort, of running water in a marble basin. . . . And if everybody could only know how sublime is the vision of a bath in the depths of Siberia!

And to-day is the anniversary of my birth. In the wretched room of an inn which is a palace compared

with the Buriat houses in which we have been living for about a week, I mentally return to Europe and see once more the dear smiling faces around me. . . . To-day I am alone in this inn. It is cold and this country is strange to me. At Easter, I remember, I was on the steamer between Seattle and Yokohama. An officer came and said, "It is Easter," then walked away. This caused me acute pain, as though I had heard a voice announcing that all my dear ones were dead. . . . So it is to-day; it is the anniversary of my birth and I am alone. . . . Haaga and I drink a bottle of beer at the restaurant.

"*Alla salute sua!*" said Haaga, raising his glass, and he had tears in his eyes.

July 3.—We started at dawn and travelled along the bank of the Selenga, a calm, wide river which comes from the distant regions of unexplored China and carries in its slow waters something of the mystery of the prodigious and unknown country in which it rises. . . .

An extraordinary guide accompanies us. Vitali had come with us as far as Verkne-Udinsk. This man has taken his place. He is a Cossack, a hetman, and is named Jegor Petrovitch. He directs us without speaking a word, with the great solemn gestures of a prophet or a preacher. At midday we halted in a station of the Posta (the stations of the Siberian Posta are the ancient relays of the diligence) to have some tea and some bread. At night we stopped in a town with a strange, fantastic name. We put up in a small inn, and there, warmed by wine and smoke, Jegor Petrovitch begins to speak. Very slowly, in a calm voice he told the tale of his grandfathers, the Cossacks. Listen!

“The fathers of his fathers were Cossacks and the sons of Cossacks; of an old, a very old tribe, whose roots are lost in the steppes of Ukraine. They were great, strong, bronze-skinned men, rich in herds and horses, men of prey and rapine, who had filled the land with the terror of their name, and whose terrible deeds were related by trembling women in the izbas smoking on the margin of the steppe. They had carried sword and fire everywhere, against every army and against every king. Riding their little brown horses they reached Poland, across the mountains and the plains of Russia. They shouted their savage war-cry to the four winds, burning and destroying, slaying and putting to flight, disembowelling women and decapitating children, and returning at last heavy with booty to their log-huts and goatskin tents buried amidst the grass of the prairie. All the young men were men of war; all the ancients were chiefs; but all, young and old, obeyed the orders of one single man, a hero—the hetman.

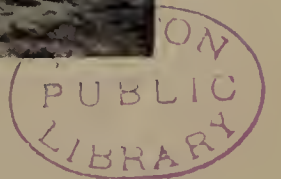
“Every spring-time, as soon as the sun had re-awakened the sap in the veins of the trees and the voices in the springs of the mountains, they armed themselves and departed towards the horizon to do battle and destroy. ✓ On their return the mothers, the sisters, and the wives counted the survivors and never wept for the absent. ✓ Afterwards they took to the tent of the chief another son, another brother, another husband, to fill up the place of the dead. They were born on horseback, they lived on horseback, and were awkward and inept when they put their feet to the ground. Their amours were as ferocious as their warfare, always tinged with blood and always decided by blows of the



REPAIRS ON THE BAIKAL HILLS.



TRANSBAIKALIA: BROKEN BRIDGE OVER THE SELENGA.





sword. Thus they lived their wild life between one battle and another, from one spring to another, never conquered, never tamed, never destroyed.

“Then one day—as every sun which rises must inevitably set—their sun began to weaken and wane. The winter did not find on the steppe those who had left in the spring, and the wives and mothers and sisters watched in vain for the return of the survivors in order to count the absent; all were missing.

“Other springs came; other men left, but never returned, and then there were no more departures. They waged warfare on the steppe itself now, around their own habitations, against their old enemies, who no longer waited for them, but carried arms against them into their own country. Songs of glory and victory were no longer heard. Their women were violated, their houses sacked, their men killed, their precious liberty broken, and they became subjects like the rest, not of the hetman, no longer of the chief of their race and their blood, but of another far-off, unknown chief, who had his seat beyond the plain and beyond the mountain in a mysterious city of which some bold traveller related to them the unheard-of magnificence. And since servitude pressed like a heavy yoke on their hitherto untamed necks, they left the maternal steppe on their horses to conquer another land in which the mysterious chief was unknown. They all left, young and old, men and women, burning their huts at their backs, destroying everything they could not carry, taking with them whatever was precious or sacred—the images of their saints and the jewellery of their wives. The strong men proceeded on horseback, the women and the old men followed in heavy carts or cloth-covered

telegas or tarantasses, bumping across the furrows of the fields.

“They travelled for months and months, always fighting, opening a road for themselves with their swords, passing through the wild hordes of the Kirghese who swarmed on the steppes; advancing always in a stream of blood and in the smoke of burning houses. They travelled without rule and without order, a river rather than an army, in groups, each one uncertain of what the other would do, but each mind fixed on one single idea—to advance always towards the east.

“In the evening they halted on the plain or in the mountain, around the camp fires over which they roasted their goats. They assembled, black with smoke and dust, tired with fighting, around one who would play the *balalaika* and sing their ancient songs. At daybreak they departed. Thus they continued for months and months towards the east, until they saw on the other side of the mountains a great blade of silver cutting a furrow in the ground. They believed it was the sea and that they had touched the frontier of the world, and they stopped. But beside the blade of silver was a group of houses, and a prisoner told them of a great unknown chief who lived beyond the plain and beyond the mountain in a mysterious, magnificent city who was the master of that blade of silver and of that splash of white houses and of all that land of Tartary.

“They recognised the chief whom they feared in the one who held all this country in his fist, and they saddled their horses once more.

“It was not the sea, that shining strip was not the frontier of the world. And they continued their wanderings for days and days, and for months and months,



across wonderful land, green with fir trees, along a marvellous river whose banks were sonorous with reeds, through a population of yellow men with oblique eyes who fled without fighting before the hoofs of their horses. They were shepherds who wandered through the forests and the plain from year to year, following their cattle, constructing their houses where the cattle stopped and where the pasture was best. They rested in the winter, and in the spring, with their tents and all their possessions, they went in search of better pastures.

“And there the Cossacks stopped. The people were contented, the land propitious, servitude was far off. They would have been able to reconstruct their life there, and they did build their houses, cultivating their fields and establishing the government of their great chiefs, the hetmans. Some, more adventurous than the rest, continued still towards the east, impelled by the fever of vagabondage, and led their horses to bathe their hoofs in the salt waves of the distant sea; others stopped half-way between the two groups and there lived.

“But they were all tired of warfare and rapine, and the rich earth gave them what in the Ukraine they had been obliged to conquer with their lances and guns. So what need for fighting and destruction?

“Thus they lived for years and years the serene, tranquil life of shepherds, obtaining from the earth and their cattle all that was necessary for their existence, living in good fellowship with the yellow people, and happy to live so.

“One day they learned that the servitude from which they had fled still pressed upon their necks, and that the power of the far-off, unknown chief extended

even to the land which they had conquered. What could they do? Go further? But further towards the east was the sea; to the south they were arrested by the mysterious land of Mongolia, to the north there was the frozen desert. And then their strength had been slowly sapped by the long peace. The great hetmans were dead, and with them the remembrance of ancient prowess. The far-off chief had told them by messages that the land which they had conquered should remain theirs, governed by chiefs chosen by themselves, but that their arms and their male children and their horses should be at his service. What could they do? Should they resist and have themselves killed? Resist, and have their houses burned, their flocks destroyed, and their women violated? They preferred to serve and to live.

“And in the land of Transbaikalia, united to the Russian Empire, in Transbaikalia, which magnificently completed the great Asiatic conquest, and which carried towards the stars the flight of the Russian eagle, they continued to live, to feed their flocks, cultivate their fields, and carry on warfare in the name of their distant hetman, whom they called the ‘Little White Father.’ As his servants they were as rude in warfare and industrious in peace as they had been strong and violent when they were his enemies. They were still born on horseback, they still lived almost entirely on horseback, and were awkward and inept when they put their feet to the ground. And all their male children were soldiers, and all the soldiers were ready to march at the signal against any enemy whatever, killing and burning without raising the question of right or wrong. But the land was theirs, and the chief loved them. . . .”

He related this wonderful history of his forbears with singular emotion in his eyes and in his voice. The whole man acquired, as his story proceeded, something of the magnificent bearing of his fathers. He acquired the solemn, almost heroic, appearance of a great chief narrating to his people their past deeds. He seemed to live in the adventures of the past, to cross the steppe killing and looting, burning and destroying, then to be vanquished and to depart towards the unknown country in the east. He seemed, too, to march with his people across interminable, hostile countries; to conquer and fall with them; to wander with them and become a shepherd, a servant, and a soldier in the service of the distant chief who was the father of all his race.

“And now,” he resumed, “now that the years have passed, now that our ancient songs are dead on the strings of the *balalaika*, and with them the old history of war; now that, on this our land, which is ours by right of conquest, so many men of the west have built their houses and their towns, after three centuries passed in worshipping from son to son the imperial descent of our great chief in blind and deaf obedience, for whose behoof we have all marched in peace and in war, against friends and against enemies, against strangers and against brothers, without questioning or hesitation, marching with all our will and all our intelligence abolished and destroyed, fused in his will and his intelligence; after three centuries of stainless fidelity and courage we return to-day to the atrocious days of war and exile, when the whole Ukraine smoked like a tremendous brazier with the burning of our destroyed dwellings. By a recent ukase the Tsar

drives us away. The Little White Father renounces us; our land is taken away from us to be given to the State. What shall we do? Shall we bend our neck beneath this new yoke? Is not this land ours which we conquered, and the conquest of which was sanctioned by an old imperial ukase so many, many years ago?

“I had three sons, sir—three male children, five years ago. They went to Manchuria, to that inferno, all three of them, and one of them returned, the smallest, with his limbs broken, to relate that his two brothers were stretched on the ground with their heads broken, and would never return. My wife died of grief, and I have remained alone, alone with that living corpse which drags itself along the ground on its mutilated legs. Have I wept? Have I complained? Have I perhaps cursed that foolish war, that fatal madness which destroyed all my happiness? In my village there were seventy young men, sons of Cossacks; sixty-eight of them went, eleven returned, eleven only. And did the mothers, wives, and sisters weep, complain, perhaps curse? Those who could not bear up allowed themselves to die of grief; the others were mute because it was their duty to be mute. What the Tsar does is well done.

“So why do they now take away our land? Why do they hunt us away? Why do they compel us to saddle our horses again and depart once more on the bitter road of warfare? They do not know, perhaps, that if at the east the sea holds us in, the west is free, and that our horses will find again the way by which they came when the irreparable shall be said or done. Why do they compel us to search again in our veins for

the ancient blood of pillagers and incendiaries, and to sound once more on our instruments the old songs of conquest? ✓ All the Cossacks of Transbaikalia have bound—you must certainly have seen it—a yellow strip on their caps in token of anger and revolt, and the least shock would cause the anger and revolt which are now maturing to blaze like a flame across the sky. ✓

“And now I believe you have heard enough to narrate in your far-off West the ancient history of conquest and burning, the splendid deeds which I have related to you of great strong men of prey and rapine who burned and sacked a whole continent in search of a free land and a country without servitude. . . .”

July 4.—That charitable providence which has assumed the serious task of plucking roses from the difficult ways of men honours us sometimes with its special attention. Yesterday it was our petrol which departed for Nova Zembla, and our oil which went to season the salad of some noble lord of the Caucasus. The other evening one of the costly tri-coloured cases of Pirelli tyres migrated to a mysterious destination. To-day it is the bridges that break. Fortunately they choose for collapsing the moment when we are not on them, otherwise I very much doubt whether the Züst would see again the dear Italian hills. Between last night and this morning sixteen have collapsed: sixteen bridges which we found still oscillating lamentably over the swollen waters and stretching to the skies their broken limbs. The good people of Transbaikalia who, since the passage amongst them of Prince Borghese, have been growing civilised and reading the newspapers, had organised for our benefit a service of boats and rafts at the fixed price of thirty roubles,

which, only after much discussion, they agreed to reduce to twenty-three. Sometimes even they co-operated with each other, and by the end of the day, when we had got out of the terrible zone, it was the starosta who received the respectable sum of 368 roubles, inclusive price. In consequence we were escorted as far as the next village in triumph amidst shouts of joy and the discharge of rifles. The women stood at the doors of their houses, surrounded by complaining children who also shouted "Hurrah." Hurrah for what? For the roubles earned, or for ourselves? I do not know, because in this beautiful summer night, beside the wonderful, slow-moving Selenga, one doubt tortures me: that charitable providence and all these terrible torrents must have had many allies amongst our ferrymen in order to effect the destruction of all these bridges. For sixteen, one after the other, are really too many, even in Siberia!

We halt at midnight at the house of a druggist, fifty versts from Missovaya. He is a little, bald man who for the last six months has not seen anybody with whom he could talk of philosophy, science, and art. So naturally he lets himself go and regales us with a rosary of learned dissertations. At three o'clock he suddenly stops, interrupted by the furious snoring of Haaga; the rest of us had disappeared into the kitchen some time before.

July 5.—The exasperating plain is finished, bound in at last by a brown line of mountains which on the other side enclose the Baikal Lake in their bosom. They are harsh mountains, thickly covered with trees, and broken everywhere into colossal fragments, which, like the débris of some battle of giants, lie scattered amidst



MISSOVAYA.

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the birches and firs. The road—of course a mountain road—is difficult but good, and parallel with it, down below, as in an abyss, is the railway.

To-day the Züst is in a good temper, and despite the steep ascent the versts fly quickly behind our backs. At six o'clock a little village appears and disappears like the page of a book opened and then shut. Then towards eight o'clock the curtain of the mountains is drawn aside, and the Baikal Lake, calm, motionless, serene, without a ripple, appears like a shining plate of metal in which the sun drowns all his rays. The houses of a little town bathe their feet in the waters of the lake: it is Missovaya, which signifies for us virtually Irkutsk, that is to say, the end of one great stage of our journey, since from there we shall go in the train to Tankoi, and from Tankoi to Baikal on the other bank in a ferry-boat. While waiting for the train, we remain here six hours amidst a crowd of people who regard us with eyes full of indignation, because to all the numerous demands which are made to us in Russian we have invariably opposed the most beautiful and the most vacant of our smiles. At Missovaya it is evidently believed that a profound knowledge of the Russian language is the basis of happiness.

July 6.—After waiting for eight hours on a pontoon, beaten by the wind, hours which were passed in combating the suspicions of a sentry who mistook us for Japanese spies, we boarded the ferry-boat. It was two o'clock in the morning, and dark, great black clouds were crossing the sky towards the south. Under the wind the lake seems to shiver with cold; to-morrow it will be very bad. At three o'clock it begins to rain; at four there is a deluge, but we have arrived. Behind us

the sky was already growing violet in the imminent dawn. At daybreak, and in a hurricane, we left for Irkutsk, only seventy versts away. The road was good, and the car went well. At six o'clock the first brick houses appeared. There was a terrible hill to climb, a short level stretch, and then the descent. At the bottom was a white mass over which emerged, like captive balloons, the domes of half a dozen churches. With loud voices we shouted—

“Thalassa! Thalassa!”

## IX

### CENTRAL SIBERIA

JULY 9.—We have been at Irkutsk for three days undergoing repairs. The bearing made in such summary fashion at Kourga was insecure; the springs have given way; the whole machine is shaken to pieces by the first three or four thousand miles of Siberia. It was absolutely necessary for us to stop. But our stay at Irkutsk was very wearisome. The place resembles Vladivostock, perhaps, but although it is similar it is more habitable. It is older, more commodious, and more of a town than that wretched barrack on the sea shore. Certainly Irkutsk is superfluous, as are in general all Siberian towns, since they are completely built before the inhabitants arrive and have been constructed in order that the population may be attracted. But Irkutsk is not as grotesque as Vladivostock with its houses that are too large, its streets that are too wide, and where everything is useless and excessive. . . .

July 10.—Having effected our repairs we left Irkutsk this morning. A great crowd collected in front of the grand hotel to watch us depart; a crowd of girls, students at the lyceum, who give us a warm ovation. We left our Cossack guide at Irkutsk, and henceforth shall proceed without one. The route to Paris is so easy that there is no danger of losing ourselves.

From Irkutsk to Kansk the road for a certain distance runs parallel with the Angara, a fine river with crystalline waters ; then recedes towards the north and ascends first to Kansk, then to Krasnoiarsk. It is an excellent road, wide, with a hard even surface. It runs alongside the railway through a marvellous forest of firs and birches—the “taiga.” It is so beautiful and easy that the Siberian tarantasses do not use it. They always follow the marshy paths between the trees of the taiga. Generally speaking the Siberian does not like a good road, because he likes the tarantass. On a good road an extraordinary contraption like the tarantass—I cannot induce myself to call it a vehicle—would be useless, so, rather than give it up, the Siberian abandons the road.

But the taiga does not begin immediately after Irkutsk. As far as Polovina, a market town some eighty versts from Irkutsk, the road runs smoothly across fields enamelled with white and yellow marguerites, broken here and there by great clumps of dark trees, and washed sometimes by the Angara. Beyond the town it hurls itself head foremost into the great forest, from which it only issues at Tomsk, there reaching the boundary of the Steppe.

But we do not arrive at Polovina this evening. All the country is flooded. In some parts even the road was submerged, and the car had to travel with its wheels half drowned. And gradually, as we approached the town, stretched along the edges of the road and in the fields which were still dry, were caravans of moujiks around great fires, within a sort of gigantic enclosure formed by all their telegas and tarantasses bound one to the other. The horses were tied by their

reins to the trunks of trees. As these encampments became more frequent we finally stopped to discover their meaning. The river Suchuja, in flood, has carried away the ferry and the ferryman; has inundated all the country some thirty versts ahead of us, and it is impossible to get across in any way. At least so it would appear. Faced by this barrier of water, the moujiks had turned back, and since it was already dark and they are afraid to travel by night because of the brigands who swarm in this country, they have pitched an encampment here.

“Is the river high?” we asked some of them.

“Eight feet?”

“And the ferry?”

“It has been carried away by the river, and it is impossible to pass.”

“But we must cross; we cannot remain here . . .”

“*Nitchevo, gaspada!* Cross over if you are able.”

But it was impossible. One verst further on the whole country was under water. One hundred yards away some moujiks were in queer narrow boats which they impelled by long poles. When they saw us with our wheels spurting the water to either side in a fan, they stopped in the midst of this extraordinary lake from which emerged trees, houses, and telegraph poles, and came smiling towards us.

“*Drasti, gaspada!*”

“*Drasti.* How can we get across?”

“*Nitchevo aftomobil.* You certainly won't get across. There is no boat.”

“Is the river deep?”

“Yes, and the bridge is broken, so that unless you

are disposed to pay . . . But look around and see what can be done.”

“What is there? . . .”

“Why, whether it is possible to make a raft with little boats bound together on which tree trunks could be placed. It is a difficult and long task . . . and costly.”

“Costly? How much, more or less?”

“Well, twenty-five or twenty roubles at least. You know there is a certain amount of danger, and we shall want many men. Are you willing?”

“Perfectly. Make the raft, and we will give you fifteen roubles. Do you agree?”

“No. It is quite impossible. At any rate, promise that you will tell nobody that we accept such a low price; otherwise we should be discredited. It is a present, believe me. . . .”

“Well, then, twenty roubles, but at once.”

“Everything shall be ready in two hours.”

They set feverishly to work, and two hours later the raft was ready and the car was embarked on it by means of a hurriedly constructed pontoon, which almost gave way under the weight of the Züst. Then the raft was started. Some ten moujiks urged it along with poles, accompanying each stroke with shouts of encouragement. The heavy craft advanced irregularly, deviating from left to right without any definite sense of direction, bumping against the trees and telegraph poles which emerged from the water and against the wooden walls of the izbas. The moujiks shout endlessly, shout orders and vituperations to each other from the bow to the stern of the extraordinary vessel. They all lose their heads and run from one side to the other,



SIBERIA : TAKING IN SUPPLIES.



SIBERIA : BOARDING A FERRY.

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jumping from trunk to trunk and trying by a torrent of exclamations to check the confused movements of the raft. We, seated on the car, merely wait, alarmed by the turn that events are taking. A night passed on this raft would be remarkably unpleasant, and all the more so because there is a deluge of rain. . . .

Evidently the moujiks have presumed too much on their strength, because for four hours we have been wandering across the flooded plain without any hope of reaching dry land. We have gone from tree to tree and from post to post, bumping and colliding, and always accompanied by the insupportable shouts of the moujiks. Their activity and their voices are formidable, and all the strength of their muscles is wasted in rushing about and shouting.

We have lighted the lamps to show up any of the larger obstacles, but they are not of the least assistance. We cheerfully continue to run our heads against everything which is placed in front of us. It is a miracle that we escape shipwreck.

At three o'clock we are in the midst of the river, which runs impetuously; every moment we fear that the current has seized us and that we shall be taken to finish our journey in the Angara or in the Baikal, thanks to the strength and the sagacity of our boatmen. But fortunately they are tired with their vociferations and gymnastics, and they dig their poles into the ground to more purpose. Just for an instant we went obliquely, much to the terror of the navigators, but we managed to overcome the current and reach an anchorage. At six o'clock in the morning the raft was beached in

close proximity to terra firma. It was then necessary to construct another pontoon for getting the car down.

We reached Polovina at eight o'clock and left at ten.

July 11.—A deluge of rain, but a good road. It has a perfect surface along which the car can travel without any stoppages or shocks. On either side was the taiga, the vast impenetrable forest of colossal beeches at the foot of which ferns and mosses weave a thick carpet. Over the forest bends a grey sky, across which wander masses of black clouds which leave their fringes suspended in the tops of the trees. Villages are rare, telegas and wayfarers more rare still.

By the evening we were in the vicinity of Zima, but here we were compelled to stop by the violent gesticulations of a moujik.

“Water! water!”

Another river broken its banks, another inundated plain, another raft. . . . But no, not the raft, not for a moment. . . . We will go to the next station and cross the river with the first goods train.

July 12.—We disembark from the train at Zima and proceed. It is still raining, but the road is good, and we continue our calm progress through the taiga without any incident.

At sunset we were eighty versts from Nijni-Udinsk, which we entered at three o'clock, after crossing the Tchuma in a ferry.

July 13.—We slept in the posting station, ignored and unknown, yet quite contented with this obscurity. But at daybreak the news of our arrival had spread, and the authorities of the district thought it opportune to come and bring us their enthusiasm. Hence we

were aroused, invited to a breakfast, a reception, and a procession. Total result—eight hours' detention in Nijni-Udinsk, and departure at six o'clock.

In the evening we arrived at Ilanskaya. It is a little village similar to all the Siberian villages which appear suddenly behind a stockade of tree trunks, which defends them like a wall around a town. The old man, long-haired and bearded, who pretends to watch at the gate of the barrier, but who, instead, is dreaming his best dreams in a mud hut beside it, is not easy to convince or intimidate. To all our most persuasive discourses, to all our strongest menaces, he serenely replies by rapidly making the sign of the cross and laughing the stupid laugh of a drunkard. The sight of a rouble, the most forcible argument in every discussion in Siberia, is sufficient, however, to bring back sense to his brain, strength to his hands, and courage to his heart, for, without the least hesitation—indeed, with the most profound bows—he throws open the prohibited gate.

It is the devil who enters, he thinks, without doubt, but he decides that it is the fault of God who permits the devil to be so rich and the moujik so poor. So his conscience is easy.

Beyond the barrier the road declines headlong towards the valley, then ascends giddily. In the hollow is the village. It is small, consisting of about fifty houses, disposed on either side of the road and joined together by a fence of tree trunks, which begins with the first house and ends with the last. The houses are low, of one storey, built on pine trunks, with small windows, in front of each of which is a single geranium plant. In the street there is not a man, a woman, or a

child, but there are herds of cows and calves, numbers of horses, multitudes of pigs, and armies of fowls. The road belongs to them by ancient right of conquest, not to the men, and they all occupy it serenely. Through this Noah's Ark our car travels like an earthquake, causing a general panic. The cows disperse, the calves seek refuge among the petticoats of the women who appear on the thresholds of the cottages, the fowls fly into the branches of the geraniums, the pigs squeal among the cooking pots in the kitchen, and the men wave their arms excitedly, the children shout with fear, the girls hide their faces in their hands. . . . But after the car has stopped, and one of us alights to inquire for the "zimskaya quartera," tranquillity returns to the terrified population, and immediately they all press around us, feel the tyres, make grimaces in our lamps, and ask us, with mysterious words, about things still more mysterious.

But Haaga sets the engine going, and the circle divides immediately. One of the men, the most courageous, has offered to guide us to the "zimskaya quartera," and has mounted the car. He distributes patronising salutes to the crowd.

Three or four houses are passed, another drove of pigs is put to flight, and a gate appears. It is the "zimskaya quartera"—the hospice open to every passer-by. Each village maintains one at its own proper cost, and the travellers who put up there leave behind them whatever offering they choose for the benefit of the institution.

The rooms, small and few, two or three at the utmost, pervaded by an atrocious odour which it is impossible to analyse; furniture of the most miscel-

laneous description : old, broken-legged couches, their cushions bleeding from a thousand wounds; chairs with two legs, maintained upright by being leant against the wall; truculent, sanguinary lithographs of ancient episodes in the glorious history of Russia—Plevna, Sevastopol, Cossack charges in Korea; a table covered with red paper and spots of oil; a monumental stove, a photograph of a soldier with a shaven head, a great drawn sword in his right hand and a bunch of wild flowers in his left—such are the main characteristics of the interior. High up on the walls are some twenty ikons of gilded metal, which are faintly illuminated by the rays of three little tapers. Chaplets of paper flowers are hung around them.

But there is no sleep here. One is supposed to sleep in the kitchen on planks suspended from the ceiling. The planks are softened by two or three old pigs' hides which are as odorous as when they formed the joy and glory of their legitimate proprietors. The kitchen is the common dormitory of the family as well as of the guests, and when you enter a family squabble is already proceeding. There are two or three old men with appallingly hairy faces, an infinite gradation of children, aged from six months to eleven years, all dirty and noisy, four or five old women without shoes or stockings, and mud-stained to their bare knees—all shout, cry, and give orders at the same time. The lady who presides over the government of this noisy and anarchical republic loses her head. She is unable to satisfy anybody. She quarrels with the women, pulls the hair of the old men, and finally flies in dismay into another room, where she barricades herself.

With the approach of eleven o'clock, however, the

revolution dies of exhaustion. The old men retire to the suspended beams beside you, the children incline their heads on their crossed arms, the women, now pacified, also climb on the beams, and a heavy silence falls.

✓ Soon, without any warning, the nocturnal concert begins. A deep note is sounded by the bass, to which the alto responds. Three or four notes from a flute are taken up by the bass, to which profound gurgles reply. The music started thus suddenly by the feeble snoring of the children rapidly develops. The old men take a hand in the game. The room is full of strange cries, groans, wheezing, and curious noises like an escape of gas. Gradually the din becomes infernal. The noise of ten locomotives is nothing to it. It enters your ears and stuns you. Men, women, and children—all are snoring sonorously with their mouths open displaying their black teeth. Beside me on the plank there is a bearded old man who sings on two notes, one deep and profound, the other acute, fine, penetrating—a note that jars on your nerves like the scratching of a diamond on glass. Another—a lady this time, who has stretched herself at my feet, thus compelling me to draw them up—has the joyful note of a bugle, but the trill is broken in its finest part by a strange sigh of anguish. Still another, also a woman, who is sleeping on the same pillow as Haaga, snores in jerks as though she was convulsed and weeping. Thus it continues until the morning. ✓

But you do not wait for morning with open eyes, for your back aches after sixteen hours on a bumpy road, and your muscles and brain are tired. So placidly, in the midst of this uproar, you drop to sleep. . . .

And then, slowly, starting at your feet and spreading gradually along your back, an itching commences. There are at first sudden, isolated prickings. They are the shots of the advance guard. Then they become more rapid, and the action really begins. The hostile army advances in close order to the assault, without the slightest hesitation. Your legs are conquered in the first engagement, then your loins are tormented by a hundred sharp pin-pricks. You defend yourself as best you can with your hands, with the coverlet, with your feet; you strike out blindly and kill hundreds at a blow; but the fury of the invasion continues more violent than ever. You raise yourself into a sitting posture because you cannot get on your feet, and you investigate the progress of the conquest. Your arms, your breast, swarm with interesting little brown creatures of all forms and all sizes; there are some that proceed by leaps, there are some that drag a great reddish paunch behind a minute head, there are some long and slender with quick, agile legs and antennæ beating rapidly. All are in motion, before and behind, along your skin; all are in a terrible state of agitation and intent solely on finding a good spot where they can strike you and dig in their weapons. And suddenly another army of monsters approaches from the air. They make themselves masters of your head, and descend to join forces with the other invaders; they are mosquitoes sounding their war trumpets. . . .

You are driven mad, seized with a violent frenzy; your hands avail you nothing, however wildly you beat them; you twist yourself like a snake, wave your handkerchief everywhere, but all to no purpose. Finally you descend from the plank and, without the least sense

of shame, throw off every shred of clothing and, seizing a pail of water from a corner, empty it over your shoulders and back and legs to calm your fever. The enemy are carried away by the flood, and then, trembling with cold, and with your teeth chattering, you return once more to the plank. The concert still continues, but your eyes are heavy. . . . The pricking, the acute itching disturbs you for a moment. . . . It is again the firing of the advance guard of a new army; but you do not mind any more, you fall asleep. . . .

A dull light from the rain-swollen sky filters through the curtains and awakens you. Everybody is still sleeping around you except the children, who, poor wretches, are scratching themselves, with good reason. On the floor is the lady of the house intent on certain mysterious doings. She has taken a small frying-pan, put into it a handful of yellowish fat and left it to splutter on the fire. With the same hand, and from the same vessel, she takes another handful of fat and anoints the head of her eldest son, and then, with his head bent between her knees, she searches and searches . . . there is a sharp, dry report as of nails cracking together.

The fat is liquefying, and, still with the same hand, which she uses as a spoon, the lady takes from another pot a whitish paste and throws it into the frying-pan, then, serenely, utilising every moment, she begins to wash the mud from her legs. One of the children has taken a large glass of water. He spits the liquid into his hollowed hands and begins to wash his face. . . .

✓ The above sketch is not peculiar to the "zimskaya quartera" of Ilanskaya; it is characteristic, practically, of the whole of Siberia. ✓



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SIBERIA : IN THE MUD.



July 14.—We left Ilanskaya at dawn. Naturally it was raining; rain is a constituent element in these forest districts. In Siberia nobody ever asks if or when the rain will finish; they inquire whether and when Siberia will end. So to-day it was water, water in bucketsful, but no mud, because the road is well built. In passing through villages only was there a little mud, caused by the hoofs of the cattle, but not enough to occasion us any embarrassment.

At two o'clock, after having crossed the Kan on a ferry, we entered Kansk, passing through a great gateway of painted wood, a species of triumphal arch erected in honour of some remote imperial visit. Twelve wooden houses, three brick houses, a church, a square, fifty soldiers, and an inn—that is Kansk.

July 15.—For all the night and half the day we have been held up at Kansk for repairs to our motor, which were certainly needed. Towards three in the afternoon we started. By a miracle which surprised us it was not raining. The road was really admirable. At eleven o'clock at night we reached Klioukvennaya and stopped in the "zimskaya quartera."

July 16.—A rapid and easy march towards the Yenisei along a truly wonderful road. It was still raining, but so slightly that if it hadn't been for the rustling of the water among the leaves of the trees of the taiga we should never have perceived it. At eleven o'clock the Yenisei appears cutting through the Steppe like the blade of a scythe, and beyond it is Krasnoiarsk, white and crowned with campaniles.

By midday we reached the ferry. The Yenisei, which seemed to be such a colossal river when viewed from the hills, grows small suddenly when we near it;

the truth is that just before Krasnoiarsk it divides into three great arms, forming two islands; hence to one who is on the first ferry it appears to be quite a small river. We drive across the first island, and pass over the second arm of the river and the second island by a wooden bridge which ends on the sandy bank whence the second ferry starts to cross the third arm of the river. Some steamers are anchored at the bank. They are grotesque paddle-boats which have the appearance of great coffee mills. They are the only sign of the grandeur of Krasnoiarsk, for it is a miserable town and its streets are empty—at least, not quite empty, because we are given an opportunity of overturning a cart loaded with eggs and milk. The driver, who was furious, came to the inn to present his account, accompanied by a gendarme. The account came to eleven roubles and twenty copecks. Seeing that this sum included a tip for the gendarme we got off very cheaply.

## X

### BRIGANDAGE AS A FINE ART

JULY 17.—Yesterday evening at seven o'clock we left Krasnoiarsk. An English employée at one of the mines piloted us outside the town for some distance along a terrible road, and then bade us adieu. But although the hour was late, and at ten o'clock we put up in a zimskaya quartera to take shelter from the deluge of rain which accompanied us from Krasnoiarsk, we did 130 versts. The road was not bad, but worrying, full of obstacles, swollen up into a thousand hillocks, which our English guide tells us are full of silver. But there is nobody to extract it.

We left the village in which we had stopped towards seven o'clock this morning—that is to say, very late. It was still raining, and a ferocious wind drove the rain into our faces. We were tired and wet to the bone yesterday, and the fire in the zimskaya quartera was a scanty one, but we preferred to wait for a few hours in the hope that the fury of the tempest would subside. But it did not. At seven o'clock we left in sheer desperation. Naturally the going was slow and fatiguing, not so much on account of the road, which was good enough, if not of the best, but owing to the rain and the wind which blew into our faces thousands of little grains of sharp sand, which wounded us painfully. Then there was the water everywhere, pene-

trating our mackintoshes and soaking us from head to foot.

We entered Atchinsk at eleven. There was nobody in the streets, because the Siberian, if he is accustomed to the deluge, has not yet succeeded in habituating himself to receive it on his shoulders, and prefers to watch it from behind the windows of his izba. For a little while we wandered about at a venture in search of a "gostinitza." Then we stopped in the middle of a road making all the noise possible, and waiting. This had a good result, since Siberian curiosity is stronger than the fear of a wetting. Ten minutes later there were assembled around us an old woman, a priest, a gendarme, and three Jews. We chose the old woman to guide us, and after some hesitation on her part hoisted her on the car. She made the sign of the cross when mounting, and looked at us with terrified eyes, murmuring pious ejaculations. But after the first yard she seemed to become suddenly intoxicated, and began smiling, gesticulating, and shouting triumphal salutations to all the windows which opened to our noise. She led us to a fine-looking hotel where the cooking was good—cutlets, soup, vodka. But above all vodka! An officer who came to sit at the table with us sent for two bottles, and he wished to constrain us to drink with him. According to custom, when the host drinks a glass of vodka all the guests drink at once. The custom is a good one certainly, but not so the vodka. That was the reason why we gave the signal as little as possible; but so far as the officer was concerned everything afforded him a pretext for drinking.

"Is it raining? *À votre santé.*"

And down went a glass of fire-water.

“Italian machine? *À la santé de l'Italie.*”

“Italian journalist? *À la santé des journalistes Italiens.*”

“A motor-car? *À la santé de l'automobilisme.*”

“Your chauffeur? *À la santé du chauffeur.*”

“Le borsch? *À la santé du borsch.*”

By the end of the meal he had found more than a score of such excuses, and his imagination was not yet tired. But he himself was tired and overcome by the alcohol, and could not keep his feet. He was accordingly carried away by the legs and arms by two robust moujiks to a bed in another room. While he was thus being transported he still repeated, “The moujik; *à la santé du moujik.*”

Towards three o'clock we left Atchinsk. We were piloted outside the town by the starosta in person, who courageously faced the hurricane. But scarcely had we got beyond the last of the houses than he was compelled to return. He was too old for that kind of aquatic diversion. Outside Atchinsk the road was bad, or at least not good. It was much cut up and thick with mud, but still practicable, in spite of the violent rain. At night we halted at a “zimskaya,” 106 versts from Atchinsk.

July 18.—Of course it was raining when we arrived at Bogotol during the morning. We took some food there, and left towards four o'clock in the afternoon, still under the rain. The road was very bad, owing to the mud, and our progress was as bad as it could be. In the evening we stopped at a house which was even more wretched and dirty than yesterday's. We stopped

because we were utterly worn out. Eighty versts in eleven hours to-day!

July 19.—Better weather and a better road; so much better, indeed, that at midday we passed Mariinsk without stopping and continued towards Tomsk. At six o'clock we are at Turuntayeva, and at eight o'clock fifty versts from Tomsk. The road was a bumpy one, it is true, but there was no rain and no mud. After eight o'clock, however, the wind fell, and the rain poured down so violently that in ten minutes the road was changed into a morass and our fine speed was restrained. Step by step, falling into the ditches which were rendered invisible by the curtain of water, we traversed the remaining distance which separated us from Tomsk. We reached Tomsk at two o'clock, but did not stop.

July 20.—Beyond Tomsk there is a river to cross—the Tom, of course unfordable and unbridged. There is a ferry-boat with paddles worked by horses walking round in a circle on the deck—a sort of *bateau à cheval*. But the ferryman is a Siberian. Hence at three o'clock in the morning he is asleep, and could not possibly make up his mind to carry us across. We arrived at his izba, woke him up, begged and prayed him, and offered him roubles.

“Here is a letter from the Minister. . . .”

“*Nitchevo.*”

“Here are twenty roubles . . . thirty roubles.”

“*Nitchevo.*”

“We will go to the Starosta, to the Pristaff.”

“*Nitchevo.*”

“But we must get over; we are in a hurry; it is cold; it is raining; we cannot wait.”





SIBERIA : FERRY ON THE OBI.



CROSSING THE OBI RIVER.

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“ *Nitchevo, gaspada, nitchevo.*”

And he retired with dignity.

We were compelled to wait under the torrential rain for between three and four hours. At seven o'clock he deemed it opportune to make up his mind, and he came to us with a smile on his lips to offer us the boat. The brigand! But, for a punishment, on the other side of the river we put in his hand fifty very meagre copecks—the regular price for a crossing. Perhaps he repented, perhaps he was irritated. At any rate, he stood with his hand outstretched, muttering something that was all the more ferocious because it was incomprehensible.

By evening we were at Kolivan, having crossed the Obi river on a ferry-boat.

July 21.—A very bad night in the “zims kaya” of Kolivan, where we were tormented by dense clouds of mosquitoes. And the journey to-day was painful also, not on account of the road, which has been dried up by the wind overnight, but on account of the mosquitoes, which worried us atrociously. From Irkutsk and before Irkutsk, in Manchuria, we have had quite enough to suffer from the horse-flies and the mosquitoes which congregated around us during the brief but inevitable halts in bogs, where we were held up by our evil fate and the mud. But we had found a remedy against their attack, empirical but decisive—that was to smoke Russian cigarettes in enormous quantities. ✓ The smoke from them is so nauseous that no insect, however anxious it may be for blood, can resist it. ✓ But here things are quite different, The mosquitoes are not of the common sort; they are great animals as big as flies, and they laughed at the smoke and the speed of

the car. They plunge their weapons deeply into the flesh of our hands and faces, and they cannot be got rid of unless they are smashed and killed on the very flesh itself. There are milliards of them whirling around us with a deafening buzz, which sometimes conquers the hum of the motor. Our hands and faces are bleeding and swollen after their attacks. At Taranskaya this afternoon, about 110 versts from Kainsk, we purchased some extraordinary veils and leather gloves which are impervious to the probosces of the mosquitoes, and with them we hope to be able to defend ourselves. We appear, it is true, a little grotesque in this outfit, but for a long time now we have forgotten the existence of a looking-glass.

July 22.—We passed through Kainsk at midday. We are completely surprised by the ease, the mildness of Siberia. This terrible Siberia, from which we expected hostility and cruel reprisals, has turned out quite easy. Easy, that is to say, in comparison with America and the first road between Vladivostock and Pogranitchaya. We had expected, it must be confessed, something quite different. Descriptions had informed us of impracticable roads, of obstinate mud, of unspeakable fatigues, and we had entered the district with palpitating hearts. But our expectations were not fulfilled. There was rain, and mud, and bad roads. But there were also two hundred kilomètres daily. ✓ If we think of the terrible days in Buffalo and Michigan City, or of the mud in Iowa, it seems to us that Siberia is a paradise for the motor-car. ✓ At six o'clock this evening we were two hundred kilomètres from Omsk. It was not raining, so we went on.

July 23.—Day was breaking when beyond the river

Omsk appeared, dazzling white, surmounted by the cupolas of its churches, which looked like enormous captive balloons floating over an encampment. We entered the town at eight o'clock in the morning, amidst general indifference. There were several employees hastening to their offices in the early morning hour, but few of them turned to look at us. Only one man cheered us, and he was the chauffeur of a petrol launch which carries on a service between Omsk and some delicious pleasure gardens a few miles beyond the town. At the hotel—the Grand Hotel de Russie—we were received like dogs in a church.

July 27.—We are held up at Omsk with all our springs broken, and held up—which is worse—in a Siberian hotel.

I admire the Siberian hotel-keeper. I admire him, not only because he is the modern, elegant personification of that noble art which was practised on the high roads by Cipriano La Gala, Tiburzi and Musolino, but also for the manner in which he practises it, for the grace, the delicacy, the intelligence which he displays. ✓ To despoil a traveller, to consider a guest in an hotel as a bitter enemy against whom all means and all arms are good; are principles of innkeeping economy too common and widespread to cause any astonishment here in Siberia, the fertile fatherland of brigandage. ✓ But in this delightful country the innkeeper is something else—something much more complicated, much more complex, more highly developed than all his European and American confrères. He is, of course, a pirate by his articles of faith, but he is something much more. He is a man of genius. The hotel-keeper in the large Siberian towns, the man who entrenches

himself behind an unapproachable office, that fantastic, mysterious personage whom you never see, or perhaps half-perceive gliding silently, rather than walking, along the carpet in a corridor and taking cover rapidly behind a door, that elusive individual is not and never can have been a common person—an ex-cook, a retired waiter, or a mere man of business. The Siberian hotel-keeper must be a poet, a great genial poet with a prodigious imagination and an inexhaustible stock of originality; a sort of Dante, Shakespeare, and Edgar Allan Poe rolled into one. ✓ In Europe, the poor wight who is compelled to sleep in a bed that is not his own is despoiled with decency; in America with effrontery; in Siberia with delicacy and sweetness as though by the soft white hands of a woman. The Siberian hotel-keeper is not an hotel-keeper, he is a corsair, a highwayman, but one who, without the least noise or violence or strife, strips you of your shirt and persuades you of his good right to do so. ✓ You weep over the trifling misadventure, over your nudity, but you do not curse him; you curse your fate. You ask for justice and aid, but not against him. It is this that shows the hand of the master. ✓ To despoil a man and make him shout is the work of ordinary brigands, but to strip him with elegance and subtlety so that he cannot have the least cause for complaint—well, that is work which ought to be sung by a poet. ✓

You fall into his arms by fatality, by the necessity of things. Where can you go at Irkutsk, at Tomsk, at Kharbin, after days and days of eating black bread and drinking watery tea, after hours and hours of rain and mud and dust? Where *can* you go, if not to that place where there is a bath and a good bed, a golden sign-

board, and waiters in evening dress? You must know what is the meaning of six or eight days' travelling amidst Siberian villages; you must know what it means to put up in a "zimskaya quartera" where your heavy sleep on the floor is broken by the attacks of legions of insects and your nostrils are offended in the morning by the infernal smell of the kitchen; you must know what it is to feed eternally on bread, tea, and eggs—on eggs, tea, and bread—on bread, eggs, and tea, for days and days, in order to understand what a temptation is offered by these happy and rare oases. How is it possible to escape their enchantment? You are fatally dragged to them, carried, crowned with flowers, to the sacrifice.

A magnificent porter, dressed in violet and gold, salutes you at the entrance with a most profound bow; a valet most kindly takes possession of your valise; a man follows with a handful of keys; a woman precedes you with her arms loaded with towels. The room is a fine one, airy and light, with a splendid red carpet. The price?

"Three roubles—a mere trifle," says the man with the keys, with a smile of disdain. You are silent, mortified. There are some more bows; then everybody disappears.

There is no water in the basin; there is no soap; the towels have been carried away by the servant. You ring a bell in desperation and explain your needs as best you can. The water appears; it is paid for separately—ten copecks a pail. The soap, moreover, is not included in the account; it is Pinaud's, and costs three and a half roubles. Then, as a final blow, the towels arrive. The good lady brings you three, naturally cost-

ing forty copecks each. You begin to ask yourself what malignant deity had whispered into your ear the name of this hotel, when new surprises supervene to bring desperation and trouble to your mind. Under the heavy curtains by which it is hidden, the bed is bare. You ring again, believing that somebody has forgotten to make it. Ten minutes later it is made, but the two sheets, the three blankets, the two pillows, and the coverlet, which are not included in the price of the room, cost you the trifle of five roubles eighty copecks. And if you venture to ask the attendant what are the ineffable things of daily use for which you pay three roubles a day, that noble personage will withdraw without replying, embracing you on the threshold from head to foot in a glance full of pity and commiseration. It is needless to add that later on a bath will cost you two roubles, a bath-gown seventy copecks, and a towel forty copecks more.

In the evening the electric light will not work. It is true that you pay half a rouble a day for electric illumination, but there is no current; everywhere, from Vladivostock to Omsk, the electric light has been in a state of repair for years; ever since it was born it has suffered from chronic illness. So you must have two candles, which cost twenty copecks apiece, and a box of matches to light them, which costs fifteen copecks. Moreover, you require a glass of drinking-water, for which you pay another ten copecks. Gradually all this becomes an obsession, an incubus; you dare not take a single step across the room for fear of knocking against a piece of furniture or moving a chair, for which you would be asked to pay more and more copecks. You wish to write, but you do not write; you wish to read

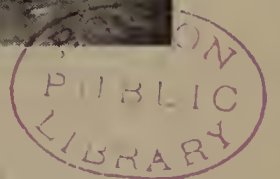




OMSK.



SLAKING THE RADIATOR'S THIRST: NEAR OMSK.





one of the French books which are on a little shelf, but you do not read. The clothes pegs, even the leaves of the green palm, the posts of the bed, have assumed the aspect of threatening arms and hands stretched out to strike you and rifle your pockets. You defend yourself from them as best you can, and only get away from the terror when the dinner hour is near and you can flee from your beautiful room, which costs you so, so little, but which has become a forest full of traps and ambuscades.

At table the diversion continues. There is a dinner *à prix fixe*; but the time is not fixed. By a strange combination of circumstances, nothing is less fixed and more fantastic than this hour, which gallops every day all over the face of the clock, fleeing from the adventurous diner without ever allowing itself to be caught. Whatever efforts you may make, whatever subtleties and assiduities you employ, the waiter will always be ready to tell you, with a countenance full of grief, that ten or five or scarcely two minutes ago the hour of the dinner or luncheon *à prix fixe* was over. You change the time, you regulate your watch, you pass hours and hours in ambush behind the door of the restaurant, to seize as it flies the precious minute of which you were advised the day before. But every time you are beaten. At last, tired with the struggle, you resign yourself to the *carte*. This is a *chef d'œuvre*, a triumph. Of course you do not understand a single word of all the pompous things which are enumerated thereon for your delight, but at least you understand the prices which are set down beside them, and naturally you point with your finger to whatever corresponds to the lowest price. Then the waiter looks at you, clasps his

hands with an embarrassed air, and asks you if that is really what you want. You confess that it is. He spreads his arms in despair, and with a sob in his voice tells you that ten minutes or five minutes or scarcely two minutes ago that particular dish was "off." And it is the same with everything else—at least all those things which cost less than a rouble. You become still more resigned, and pay R.2.20 for a cutlet, R.1.50 for a piece of fried fish, R.1 for a "sweet," forty copecks for an orange, and so on.

Then at night, after you have for two hours been trying to drown your desperation in the noisy music of some tzigane band, you return to your sumptuous domicile. A torrent of light filtering through the glass over your door dazzles you in the corridor. Somewhat surprised you enter, and on the sofa that is farthest from the door, amidst the yellowish light of eight candles, you see a lady sitting. She is well dressed and apparently rich, and beneath the thick veil which covers her face you imagine that she is young and beautiful. She seems to be deeply moved and bashful, with her eyes bent on the ground or absorbed in the toe of her boot, which appears and disappears nervously under her silk petticoat. You, who for the last four hours or so have been navigating the seas of dreamland, pinch your arms to see if you are really awake. Then you close the door, respectfully approach, and inquire. . . .

But before you get out a whole sentence the lady, having raised her veil, overwhelms you with a flood of explanations. She is very young, married to an old, paralytic general who torments her day and night with his egotistic and stupid jealousy. She is well educated, and has fed her youth on the marvellous tales of

strong, adventurous men, of warriors, and pale poets. And of one of these men, as was only natural, she had always dreamed that she would be the wife and the passionate lover, that he would wind his strong brown arms around her white shoulders. But on the contrary, she has had an evil, a malign destiny. She leads a gloomy life beside a wearisome old man, lives in a perpetual widowhood, dark and dull as a rainy day. But this morning she has seen you pass, young and beautiful (the lady is speaking, dear reader), on your car, and immediately the hero of her dreams and desires appeared. She loved you—loved you immediately, is mad for you, mad for your eyes, mad for your love, mad for so many things, in fact, that she has broken every bond, defied all appearances, and come here to you, trembling with passion. . . .

Next morning, in the account, you will find—

“Passion 30 roubles.”

But it is time for you to leave. Your luggage is ready, and you wait for the final account, the *coup de grâce*. It is brought to you by the secretary, a chlorotic damsel with eyes of such a pale blue that the pupils seemed to be dissolved in the white of the cornea. She is sent to you so that the shock should be softened. You take the interminable list and hardly venture to read it:

Boot-cleaning for three days . . . . .	R.1.80
Box of powder and eau de Cologne for the lady	8.00
One sheet of fly-paper . . . . .	.80
<i>Pourboire</i> for lady's maid . . . . .	3.00

You do not read any further; your eyes swim and your mind is in a whirl. You pay without asking any

questions, without insisting upon anything, in terror lest you should see at the bottom of the list—

“For various alms to the poor in the town in the name of your excellency, R.30.”

Which certainly would be the least surprising thing of all.

## XI

### TOWARDS EUROPE

AUGUST 2.—A week, one whole week, we remained at Omsk carrying out urgent repairs to the car. Our poor machine has been wounded and harassed by these six months of continual fatigue and travel on broken and impracticable roads, steep mountains and deep valleys, under rain, snow and hail, and mud. It is patched and pieced and full of bandages and scars, like an old warrior who has escaped from battle. It is continually falling ill, and each time more seriously. The differential will hardly work, the chassis is in the worst possible condition, the bearings are worn out, and the wheels rattle in them. The chains are so weak that they are continually breaking. Our poor Züst is tired.

At Omsk, therefore, we were compelled to repair the whole hinder portion of the carriage body, which was falling to pieces; the springs—it is the fourteenth pair that we have changed—and the chain wheels, and since there was not a single place here where metal was worked, the difficulties have been enormous. It was only to-day that we were able to finish, and leave in the direction of Ishim. It is from Omsk that the itinerary of Prince Borghese left the Trans-Siberian railway, ascending to Ishim and Tiumen, and from there bending towards Ekaterinberg and the Urals,

while the railway line continues straight to Petropavlovsk, Cheliabinsk, and Samara. We have chosen the Ishim route, which is longer, but which will be less difficult for getting supplies of petrol. Up to this point we have availed ourselves of the services of the Nobel firm, who took thought for everything, and always reported to us by telegraph two or three stages ahead the place where a depôt was made and the quantity that had been left. But between Omsk and Ekaterinberg we have been obliged to think for ourselves. So we have provided ourselves with a postal telega, a species of light vehicle drawn by three horses. Hence we have a depôt at Ishim, another at Tiumen, a third in some place between Tiumen and Ekaterinberg.

So we started. The road was excellent at first, as soon as we had been ferried over the river Irtisch. Then it gradually grew worse, and finally became impossible under the continuous rain. The ruts were very deep, sometimes as much as twenty inches. Mud and water was spread abundantly on the road level with the cart tracks, making them invisible. So the going was very difficult, and occasionally we had to dismount and push. Only at eleven o'clock, after a difficult crossing of the Ishim, we were able to stop in the zimskaya quartera at Abretskoia. We were so tired, Haaga and I, that we almost fell asleep on our feet.

. . . . .

He entered the room suddenly, without making the least noise, and approaching the oil lamp lighted a cigarette at its flame. Then he seated himself calmly on a bench beside me. He is a tall, brown-skinned



man, with a reddish, unkempt beard which falls in tufts and bushes to his chest, and rises upwards to mingle with the red, greasy hair which flows rebelliously in all directions, and is scarcely tamed by a cap. He wears a red blouse confined at the waist by a black belt, and great hob-nailed boots covered with mud. His thin hands are covered with warts, and his pendent lower lip displays his broken teeth. He sits down and follows with his eyes the blue clouds of smoke which rise to the ceiling from his cigarette. I looked at him astonished. What is he, what does he want ; why does he come here in this room of the zimskaya, which belongs to us ?

“Have you come in a motor-car ?” he asks suddenly, in very bad French.

“Yes, in a motor.”

“I have seen it in the courtyard. A very bad road, was it not ?”

“Oh, terrible.”

“Yes, yes, terrible, like everything in this savage Siberia and this Russia, which is still more savage. The roads, the Government, justice ; everything is terrible.”

“You are not a Russian ?”

“I am a Greek, but I love this country as much as if I had been born in it, and I suffer by seeing it suffer.”

“Does it suffer much ?” I ask, with the instinctive curiosity of a journalist.

“Oh, very much ; it is uncivilised, poor and abject, and the Government prefers to leave it so, so that it can always have it under its hand. But you, what do you think of it ?”

“I? I do not think anything of it, I am an Italian. But practically I am of the same opinion as yourself.”

“Ah; it is good now and again to find amongst this swinish population somebody who has the courage to tell the truth, and . . . excuse me, do you come from far?”

“From Paris.”

“Ah! from Paris. And you are going . . .?”

“To Paris.”

“Have you come from Ekaterinberg?”

“No, no, from the sea. From Paris we went to New York. We have crossed America, Japan, and the whole of Siberia from Vladivostock.”

“It is a long journey. And so you have been to Japan. What do you think of that country?”

“It is a fine country, in my opinion, capable of anything. It is a country which will be still more spoken about within a few years.”

“So you believe that? Even after the war with Russia, which must have exhausted it?”

“Young bodies recover soon from their wounds, but not so Russia, which I believe will need a number of years before her wounds are healed.”

“You do not, it seems, believe much in the strength of Russia?”

“Not a great deal.”

“Ah, ah! And you are Italian? Yours is a small country?”

“You are mistaken. Italy is a large, a very large country, which very few people know, which still fewer appreciate, but it is a country which has a great future.”

“You must love it a great deal. But tell me frankly . . . you are not really Italian?”

“What do you mean? . . . I am Italian, very much Italian, and I will not allow you to doubt me.”

“You are wrong to get warm and irritated, because I am your friend; I have a safe house where nobody will come to ask you who you are or who you are not, or why you have arrived mysteriously in a mud-be-spattered car at night in a little village when there is a town twelve versts further on; and, in conclusion, why you have forgotten to show the lady of the house your documents, and relate to me a pleasant story of two continents traversed and of one more still to cross. . . .”

“This is espionage.”

“No, it is a proof of friendship that I am giving you, believe me. Come with me.”

“You are quite mistaken; we are not what you think; we are merely peaceful tourists.”

He rose to his feet and looked us up and down. Then he slowly approached the door.

“Believe me,” he said as he went out, “you are quite wrong.”

A heavy silence fell on the room. I and Haaga looked at each other without speaking a word. Then gradually calm was restored to our minds and fatigue prevailed. With our heads bent on our folded arms we drowsily awaited the samovar.

. . . . .

I am aroused by a trampling of feet; the room is full of people—an officer, covered with mud, a man dressed in European clothes, a pope, a clerk, and three or four moujiks. At the door, with drawn swords, are

two gendarmes ; two Cossacks on horseback can be seen in the street through the windows. No one speaks a word ; they all sit calmly in a circle around us, and we watch them stupefied with astonishment. The clerk has carried into the midst of the semicircle a table and placed his papers and pens thereon. The person dressed like a European is a fine strong man with a little blond beard, which he pulls incessantly, as if he were suffering from a species of tic. The officer is an ordinary type, with a little bristly moustache, hair shining with pomade, little eyes buried deeply behind swollen lids. The pope, on the other hand, is solemn-looking in his black gown, with a wave of blond hair flowing over his shoulders and a golden beard which caresses his breast. They are all glistening with rain, which shines like drops of dew in their beards and in the hair of the pope. At their feet little puddles spread, carrying with them the dust of the floor. They all remain mute, expectant. In the oppressive silence one hears continually the rippling of rain in the gutters, and the trampling of the impatient horses outside.

The terrified servant has brought four candles and deposited them on the table before the clerk. The pope has opened a case of silk and velvet, from which he has taken out a Russian cross, and placed it on the table, resting against the back of a book, between the candles.

“Who are you ?” asks the man in European clothes.

“And who are you ?” I inquire.

“I am the Starosta of the village ; this gentleman is an officer of police, and the other is the priest of the

village. Now that you know in what guise we come to you, I hope you will be so good as to tell us who you are, whence you come, and what you are doing."

"We are Italian motorists, and we come from Vladivostock. As to what we are doing here, we are waiting for the samovar."

"Why have you stopped here and not in the neighbouring town?"

"Because we had no carbide for the lamps, the night was dark, and it was raining."

"And you say you come from . . . Vladivostock."

"No, more precisely from Paris, via America and Asia."

"But have you no documents, passports?"

"And if we have none?" I persisted, as I was beginning to take an interest in the game.

"We shall be compelled to come to the conclusion that you are enemies dangerous to Russia, and to send you under a good escort to Omsk, where you will have to undergo a trial."

"But we have no time to lose, and we are acting upon a precise denunciation," added the officer, testily. "A little while ago you have most insolently censured the enlightened acts of our sovereign, and established between a foreign power and the country which now offers you hospitality, comparisons which are disparaging."

"Ah, I understand; the charitable Greek . . ."

"That man merely did his duty as a patriot, and no one can blame him for it. As for you, who even now and in my presence preserve such a fine assurance and audacity, well, as for you, I can promise that we shall be able within a couple of hours to produce some

little change in your state of mind. The automobile, Starosta ?”

“It has been thoroughly searched, and is now being guarded. Besides, two Cossacks are on the road . . .”

“And the result ?”

“Nothing, absolutely. Some books, some maps, rifles, a typewriter which I have, as a precaution, had taken to my house, some pieces of machinery, biscuits, utensils, ropes—but nothing really compromising. Ah, I forgot, a large sheet of paper was on the typewriter, addressed to the *Daily Mail*, London, written in Latin characters. He must be their mysterious correspondent. . . . You know that all the dangerous Russians take refuge in London. I have had the machine taken, as I have said, to my house.”

“Very good ; let us return to these *Italian* gentlemen. We must get on. Have you any documents ?”

Without replying to him, because he irritated me, I turned to the Starosta.

“I have this letter, if it is any use. . . .”

In a loud voice the Starosta reads—

“We, the Minister of the Interior of the Russian Empire, in the name of His Majesty the Tsar, order all the authorities, civil and military, Russian and Siberian, to lend to the Italian Züst automobile participating in the race from New York to Paris, and to its occupants, Antonio Scarfoglio and Heinrich Haaga, all the aid and assistance of which they may stand in need, to place at their disposal men, horses, soldiers, and guides, and to exempt them in the most absolute manner from all the formalities usually observed as regards foreigners.”

They were dumbfounded ; they rose to their feet as

one man amidst a great noise of moving chairs. The Starosta excused himself, and asked me for news of our journey; the clerk hastily put away his pens and paper; the pope returned his cross to its case; the gendarmes lowered their swords. The rain pattered against the windows, and the rippling in the gutters was resumed; the Cossacks' horses grew still more impatient under the deluge.

They went away, one by one, embarrassed, smiling, obsequious, descending the steep stairs and continuing to salute us respectfully when they reached the bottom. The lady of the house, now completely reassured, went about the room replacing the chairs.

August 3.—The incident of yesterday evening put us in a good humour, and enabled us to attack the terrible road with better spirit. It was a terrible road, beaten by a violent rain which never ceases and never tires, and which, after falling for days and days, has changed the road into an enormous bog. The mud stretches beyond the road, across the Steppe, and is bounded only by the horizon. It is an immense lake of mud in which we navigate without any idea of direction, except that which is given to us by the telegraph poles.

At three o'clock we reached Ishim, where we found that our stock of petrol had not arrived. The only *apoteka* in the place has something less than half a pint, used for cleaning gloves.

August 4.—We waited until four o'clock to-day until the petrol which we had despatched from Omsk in a telega should arrive. It came very late, and consequently we left very late on our way to Tiumen, but we made up for a lot of lost time on the road. At eight o'clock we had done a hundred and twenty miles, and

by four o'clock in the morning we were at Tiumen. We knocked up an old Jewish chemist who had our reserve of fuel, took in supplies, and were off again. Still raining.

August 5.—Another sixty-five miles to-day, in spite of the rain and the very bad road. We should have continued travelling through the night, but Haaga was not very well, and we preferred to stop in the zimskaya. We shall make up the lost time to-morrow.

August 6.—We do not leave to-day. Haaga is unable to get up. He had a fever during the night, and this morning is very unwell. I know as much about medicine as would send some unfortunate wretch decently to the cemetery, but I did my best to alleviate Haaga's pain. We had with us a little medicine chest full of all the most useless drugs, bandages, and surgeon's tools—strange, mysterious instruments which I would not dare to touch even with the tips of my fingers. But the chest does not contain what of all things would be most serviceable in the present case—that is, a good purgative. For Haaga is suffering from the most atrocious colic, and his spasms are fearful. I have given him some laudanum and quinine, which seemed to be at the same time the most appropriate and the least pernicious remedies in this case. It has been impossible to make a bed for him. In Russia in general, and in Siberia in particular, there are no such things as beds in the zimskaya; the people, as I have already described, sleep on the floor and on a sort of suspended platform. There are no mattresses and no sheets, so Haaga has been compelled to stretch himself on a heap of furs. After great efforts I was able to arrange that he should not be put into the kitchen like



all the travellers on the Siberian "track," but he has been placed in another room amidst the ikons and the lithographs of the Russo-Japanese war. Moreover, I have sent the moujik in the telega to Kamiloff, about eighty versts away, in search of a doctor of some kind.

He had a very bad night with high fever, but towards daybreak his temperature came down a little.

August 7.—The doctor has arrived; he is a Jew, of course—a greasy personage with a dirty grey beard. He calls himself Vladimir Vladimirovitch, and as far as I can make out he knows as much of medicine as I do—perhaps a little less. But he speaks with dignity and discusses matters with the lady of the zimskaya, who approves everything he says, and he walks about with an air of importance, making the floor shake under his heavy boots. Then he prescribes—laudanum and quinine. Naturally he speaks Russian, and still more naturally I do not understand it. I have a vague intuition, however, that he is some stupid and presumptuous veterinary surgeon.

His visit is over, and he is just going away. He wraps round his neck a muffler of lurid-coloured wool, passes a hand through his beard, puts his fur cap on his head, and waits.

I call a moujik, who has been in the St. Petersburg garrison, and ask him—

“Can I, or can I not, know the nature of the illness of this poor youth?”

“Wait a moment,” he replies. He goes away, approaches the monument of wisdom, and asks him something. The charlatan replies in a few monosyllables, and then dismisses the moujik with a gesture.

“ He has said that he cannot give an opinion unless he is paid beforehand.”

“ And how much does he ask ? ”

“ Ten roubles. The price of an ordinary visit would be five roubles, but then there are two roubles more because he has come from Kamiloff here in a very uncomfortable vehicle, and three roubles because the patient has a fever. You know that illnesses with a fever cost more than those without.”

I give the ten roubles with a sigh. The Hebrew counts them in the palm of his hand, sounds them on the window-sill, and examines them attentively. Then he puts them in his pocket with visible satisfaction, and subsequently calls the interpreter and speaks to him.

“ Well ? ” I inquired, impatiently.

“ Well, he says that he cannot make a decided statement. It may be that it is merely an affection of the chest ; it may be that it is indigestion ; for the present, however, he cannot say any more than that there is a little fever. Perhaps, afterwards, when he has made two or three other visits . . . ”

“ And when he has pocketed another thirty or forty roubles for coming here to discover that the patient has a fever. . . . Tell this worthy scientist that he can go without the further loss of a minute to the devil, and take himself out of the way of my feet before I cause him to see the soles of my boots.”

I was furious, not on account of the ten roubles, but because of the enormous amount of time which this grotesque cheat has made me lose—about two days, waiting for him to come. When my message has been interpreted to him he does not move an eyelid, and without taking a step towards the door, he begins to

speak hurriedly with the interpreter. I watch him with rising anger.

“He has told me,” the moujik comes back to report, “that he cannot at any cost abandon the sick man. He affirms that every patient, from the moment that he touches him, ceases to have parents or friends or companions, and enters entirely under his care and under his responsibility. He would rather beg that you should go out of the room because you are disturbing the patient. . . .”

With a single bound I seized the charlatan by the shoulders, turned him round and kicked him out. Outside the door he stops, readjusts his cravat, and extending his fist begins to vomit a stream of incomprehensible vituperations and threats of terrible reprisals. The moujiks make a circle round him, and in the lower room the lady of the house and the interpreter look at him, terrified.

August 8.—During the night Haaga’s temperature continued to rise, and he became delirious. Alone, ignorant, and in a strange country, without any means of communication, cut off from everything and everybody, I did not know what to do. I gave him such remedies as were in my power, and watched over him for three days and three nights, but the battle is getting beyond me.

Towards nine o’clock a tarantass stopped at the door, and the dirty Hebrew charlatan alighted. He entered the room with a magnificent air of patronage, brandishing a folio full of strange hieroglyphics. He stopped in the middle of the room at the foot of Haaga’s couch and began to jabber villainously in a high voice. The conversation of the moujiks was

drowned by this terrible torrent of words, and they all turned to watch him with an air of profound respect. I had to get my interpreter to ask the man to stop, but I had not the courage to chase him out of the room again. I know perfectly well that he is a useless and presumptuous ass, an ignorant charlatan. But I should feel remorse afterwards, in the event of a misfortune, if I had not tried everything. So he remained and sat himself on a stool beside Haaga, and began to torment him by touching his pulse. The poor sufferer let him have his way. The interpreter moved over to his side, and after talking in a low voice with the man of wisdom, he came to whisper in my ear—

“Do you know he has a fever?”

“Yes, I know it.”

“And a high fever?”

“I know that also.”

“And that . . . ten roubles. . . .”

“Here they are, but tell him that I do not want to be annoyed any more. Let him keep his precious discoveries to himself, and leave me and the patient in peace. . . .”

August 12.—To-day Haaga went out in company with myself and the interpreter. He went to salute the car and to see it. He wanted to start working on a brake which did not act perfectly, and I had enough trouble to prevent him. But as a compensation he insisted on oiling the gear; and he sang as he worked.

August 13.—We started to day, late, towards ten. I was unwilling to get away, and all the more so because the weather was gloomy and threatening. But Haaga would go at any cost. All the moujiks, with the

Jewish doctor at their head, came to bid us farewell, grouping themselves round the car. Vania, the lady of the zimskaya, wished to embrace us. She was still weeping an inexhaustible fountain of tears when we started, and she stood motionless in the muddy road when we were a long way off, waving her hand to us. They are good, brave people, these Siberians, hospitable, morbidly sentimental, and with super-acute affections. I was quite sorry to leave these gentle moujiks and that good woman. . . .

We were soon into a forest, a little less dense than the great taiga, which ends at Tomsk. The road through the trees was excellent, level and smooth enough for our wheels, which have known the terrors of the Rocky Mountains and the roads of Iowa. Altogether we were quite satisfied with Siberia and its "track," much more satisfied than we were with the roads of America. As a matter of fact, we had expected something much worse. It is true that "chaussées" are rare and not very good—from Irkutsk to Krasnoiarsk the road is all chaussée for more than a thousand kilomètres—but they exist, whereas in America it would be vain, except in California, to hope for a road that had even a rolled surface.

The road to Ekaterinberg is wide, regular, level. But there is the rain! Since we left Irkutsk—that is to say, forty days ago—it has been raining without a minute's cessation. We have slowly become accustomed to this deluge; we have almost forgotten the sun; we imagine it to be something pale, and far off, some intangible goal from which emanates all happiness, but which we shall never know again. The rain seems to have become a normal element in the life of man,

and mackintoshes and waterproofs are his natural vesture.

At three o'clock in the evening we pass Kamishloff. We had then our first sensation of Europe. There were no izbas in the neighbourhood, and amongst the people on the road there were very few beards or bushy heads of hair. In passing, moreover, we saw a *café chantant*. A gorgeous porter clothed in a red uniform stood at the door shouting, "La Belle Fatma, Turkish odalisque, virtuosa in the danse du ventre." There can be no mistake about it ; we are in Russia.

We enter Ekaterinberg towards eleven o'clock at night. The wide streets were deserted. Only the electric lamps were awake, their light reflected from the asphalted footpaths glistening in the rain.

III  
EUROPE





# I

## THE LAST BOUNDARY

AUGUST 15.—It was very late, almost night, when we left Ekaterinberg for Perm. We were accompanied outside the town by two motor-cars and a motor cycle. They guided us for ten or fifteen versts, then returned. Naturally it was raining, but the rain does not cause us any discomfort or preoccupy us greatly to-day, when we are expecting to reach the last boundary, the obelisk, before which will extend the last continent and the road which terminates only at Paris. We have retained for the solemn moment two bottles of champagne in the bottom of the car and emotion in the depths of our hearts. We shall give the signal to each other as soon as we have put foot on *our* land. For we have come to call Europe ours, and to stretch our true country across a continent.

We have been travelling for seven months—seven months of toil and labour, seven months during which half of the earth has passed under our wheels. In all that time we have only had one desire, one hope, one vision—Paris, the Eiffel Tower, raising its giraffe-like skeleton to the blue sky and the city stretching at its feet between the verdant hills. . . . To-night, along this green road, at the end of which, twenty miles from us, mysterious and immense Asia comes to an end, I

recall every incident of the journey—the snowstorms of the first days, the awful mud of Iowa, the silent plains of Wyoming, the terrible nights and painful days on the Rocky Mountains, the suffocating deserts of Nevada, and fragrant California. Then the sea, and the poor Japanese, dying far from his paradise; the rickety bridges and harsh Fujiyama, the fearful nights of Tsuruga. Then, in Asia, the tortures of Eastern Siberia, the four hundred and fifty miles along the Manchurian railway; the fire at Ymen-po, and the Transbaikalian Desert; the ceaseless rain in the Steppe and the “taiga,” and the nights spent in the mud, nights when our teeth chattered with cold under the deluge which penetrated our useless waterproofs; the dreadful marches through clouds of mosquitoes and horse-flies, which stung us until they drew blood; and the last tragedy—Haaga suffering the agony of fever in a primitive village, and I, alone, ignorant and compelled to watch his life ebbing away, unable to assist him.

So Paris is the end, the port in which we shall cast anchor; and for us to-day Paris lies immediately beyond the obelisk which divides Asia and Europe. . . .

But we have had to bottle up our emotions and preserve the champagne for a better occasion. For we did not see the fateful obelisk, just as we did not see the Urals. We had passed them, and were already in Europe when we stopped beside a mounted gendarme and asked him, in German—

“How many versts to the Urals?”

“The Urals?”

“Yes, the Urals, the mountains which separate Asia from Europe.”



A RUSSIAN TELEGA.



THE FRONTIER OF EUROPE.

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The gendarme burst into the most irreverent laughter, which filled us with indignation.

“The Urals, the Urals! But you have passed them half an hour ago. You are in Europe now. . . .”

And he continued laughing. We watched him, uncertain whether he was having a joke with us or had suddenly gone mad.

“My friend,” said Haaga, “it is useless to keep up this jest, which is in the worst possible taste. I repeat the question, ‘How many versts from here to the Urals?’ I beg you to reply seriously.”

“But I tell you that you have already passed the Urals, because the Urals are *there*.”

And he pointed with his hand to a brown line which broke the horizon at our backs.

We were bewildered. To cross a chain of mountains and not to perceive it seemed to be too much altogether.

The gendarme continued—

“So you really believe that the Urals are mountains? You did not know that they were easy little hills, almost imperceptible, wrinkles rather than real hills. The same thing happens to all the people who travel for the first time between Asia and Europe. And as for the obelisk, they never see it; they do not take any notice of it. They imagine that it is something grand, something pompous, something like the great wall of China. But where do you come from?”

“From Paris.”

“And you are going . . . ?”

“To Paris.”

It was his turn to be astonished.

“From Paris to Paris? So you have passed the boundary twice?”

“No ; we are coming from Paris across America and Asia, and are returning through Europe. . . . The tour of the world, you understand . . . a great ring round the earth, the two ends of which will be joined at Paris. . . .”

“I understand now. But what have you done all this for ? To get something ?”

“Nothing ; merely for the sake of doing it.”

He did not say another word. He thought for a moment, then shook his head.

“Have you passports ?”

“This letter is our passport,” said Haaga, showing the talisman.

He examined the document carefully, handed it back to us, and waved his hand in token of farewell. But his eyes had an expression of infinite compassion. We were madmen, certainly. And standing in the middle of the road he continued to watch us as we receded from him.

At ten o'clock at night we stopped at a little village in a European “zimskaya quartera.” But there was a bed !

August 16.—We saw the sun to-day for the first time after leaving Irkutsk—the true sun, burning and luminous, filtering through the branches of the birch trees which join their arms overhead across the road. It was almost an intoxication to us, who had been, so to speak, annihilated by the last forty days of rain beating upon our backs, penetrating our skins, and sapping all our courage and will. In the warmth and the light we have travelled with indescribable pleasure, with a joy to which we have been unaccustomed for a long time. The sun lightly caresses our backs, and we

feel its warm kiss on our necks. A great cloud of dust swirls in dense spirals behind our backs, and Haaga and I speak without ceasing of the most ridiculous and useless things, from the mere necessity of talking and hearing the sound of our own voices. At one moment we stopped, without any need for doing so, or any necessity, merely for the purpose of alighting and stamping our feet, and walking a little, so that we might feel the whole of our bodies bathed in the sun and the sweet air. We walked amidst the trees and played like schoolboys. Then we both stretched ourselves under the pines, and thus remained for half an hour silently watching the sparrows quarrelling in the branches. Then we resumed our journey.

Towards three o'clock we halted in a little unknown village to effect some necessary repairs. While Haaga walked off to a workshop I remained with the car in the midst of a crowd of moujiks. They all spoke noisily, gave their opinions about the lamps, discussed and laughed, but did not dare to approach too near. One old woman, however, broke the circle of spectators, and approaching me, said—

“*Drasti gaspada?*” (How do you do?).

“*Drasti.*”

“*Cu da?*” (Where from?).

“*Pariso*” (From Paris).

“*Su da?*” (Where to?).

“*Pariso*” (To Paris).

She was astonished. She evidently believed that I was joking with her, and she began to spit out a cascade of vituperations—as it seemed to me—of the most varied description. But my wisdom stopped short at the four words already given, and perhaps

half a dozen vocables of common use. I did not understand the objurgations, and hence I remained perfectly calm under the deluge. But the good lady doubtless believed that my attitude was the result of well-calculated contempt, and she came close to me with her fist clenched. She said just one word—

“*Durac!*” (Idiot!).

This is a word which I know, because it was hurled at me by a Russian girl to whom I had made a declaration in French, being persuaded that French was the language of love in all latitudes. But I do not know the reply. I remained mute and motionless, smiling under the insult. Then the old woman grew tired of shouting, and withdrew from the group. She was succeeded by a man with a long flowing beard. He tapped me familiarly on the shoulder and began chattering at a great rate. He must have told me some most amusing things, because the whole assembly held its sides with laughter. I listened to him with a certain smiling complacency, not understanding a single word; but it seemed to me dignified to feign to understand, and my smile was so ambiguous that it lent itself readily to any interpretation. The only thing that disturbed me was the horrible smell of alcohol which he blew into my face with every word. A bottle of vodka was sticking out of the pocket of his breeches.

Finally Haaga came to liberate me from the facetious discourse of this drunkard. The engine was started noisily, and the car left. In the dust which we left at our backs the moujiks remained watching us, and the son of Bacchus was still gesticulating.

We were obliged to stop also at Kongousko. It was market day and the streets were swarming with



immense crowds of people—Tartars, Mongols, Russians, Buriats, Kirghese. We were compelled to halt while an immense caravan of telegas passed. Outside the town began the first groups of Tartar villages. It is now rather difficult to distinguish the Tartars from the Russians, because they have almost entirely lost their distinctive characteristics. They still preserve the little Mongolian beard, and they have almond-shaped eyes in their olive-coloured faces, but only a few of them wear the traditional Tartar dress. They all wear great boots, live in izbas, and marry Russian wives. Even Allah has established himself in a wooden Russian house surmounted by a low minaret which looks like an old bird-cage. He seems to feel that he is a foreigner, that he is not in his own home, that he is, as it were, in a furnished room. Mahomet is a boarder here.

The Tartar villages continue until Perm and cease a little before its walls. Where the electric light begins Allah stops.

We enter Perm at night. It has wide streets bathed in the brilliant light of great arc-lamps. There were a few bustling officers making their spurs ring on the pathways, and a big troika containing a crew of ladies and youths in evening dress and intoxicated with champagne. This is certainly Europe!

August 17.—We were unable to start to-day because Haaga needed rest. So we spent the whole day shut up in an hotel watching the Kama flow silently between its banks. This also was a magnificent summer day, full of light and sun, but neither Haaga nor I went out. I do not know how it is, but both of us have now lost all sense of curiosity. We no longer feel the desire to see and to know. We pass through all this

strange and unknown land with absent eyes and indifferent minds, like old men who have already seen too much. We prefer to remain motionless stretched on a sofa before a window and to watch others moving and hurrying themselves, and all the more so because the lady of the hotel is an enthusiast and listens gladly to stories of great adventures.

Towards evening, with the first light of the electric lamps, a stout man came to find us. He brought us the salutations of the *Matin* and a tiny Italian flag. Then he compelled us to walk to his house. He has a bakery here and a wife—a Parisienne whom he married six months ago. The poor woman wept with joy on seeing us.

“*Me croyez-vous?*” she said, “*depuis six mois je ne peux prononcer un seul mot de français ici. Je suis venue en exil, comme la Sonia de Dostojevski, derrière les pas de mon mari. . . .*”

“*Et vous regrettez beaucoup la France?*”

“*Oh! de tout mon cœur. Mais j'aime mon mari et ça me suffit. Je ne pense qu'à ma France lointaine et je lis des journaux, beaucoup de journaux français: ça me rappelle mon doux pays. J'étais là, vous savez, quand vous êtes partis, j'étais devant l'hôtel du Matin et je vous ai applaudi. Je vous revois ici à présent et ça me fait un rude plaisir de vous avoir salué encore. . . . Vous partirez?*”

“*Demain matin.*”

“*Par la route de Okansk?*”

“*Oui.*”

“*Mauvais chemin. Vous aurez de la peine.*”

“*Ça ne fait rien. Nous passerons.*”

“*Bonne chance. Et saluez-moi la France. Baisez*

*la première femme que vous verrez sur le sol français. Et si elle résiste et se fâche, dites lui que c'est pour mon compte, pour le compte d'une pauvre déportée. . . . Elle vous pardonnera, sûrement. . . .*"

*"Au revoir, madame."*

*"Au revoir et bonne chance. Encore une fois, bonne chance."*

In bed at night Haaga and I had a long discussion over this poor woman and her curious message.

## II

### THE ROADS OF RUSSIA

AUGUST 18.—The sun disappears for our departure. It was already tired of shining after two days, during which it has given us joy. But there was no rain. The skies were grey and gloomy, and the streets of Perm were emptied by a cold, biting wind which swept them from end to end, raising the dust in enormous clouds. There was nobody to salute us but our hostess. So we left amidst general indifference, passing through the streets of Perm along the Kama, grown suddenly dark under the threatening storm which was already murmuring among the tall trees. The road was very bad at first, somewhat sandy and embedded in a forest, broken every few yards by ditches and holes, and growing worse as we proceeded towards the south.

Towards six o'clock we arrived at Okansk, a pleasant little town on one bank of the Kama, half Tartar and half Russian. But it is the ancient Russia, Russia of the time when the churches were built like strong castles and the houses round them were humble vassals. Men, things, and shops are all patriarchal; ikons and crosses are affixed to every wall; the houses are of finely carved wood; the women wear typical costumes and the children are dressed in red shirts and wear great boots as soon as they are two years old. It is the true Russia—Russia whole and sound, perhaps in order that

it may defend itself better from the attacks and the malice of the demon—which demon has his abode in the Tartar minarets reflected in the river.

August 19.—We have left the river. From Okansk the mere trace of a road cut out by the horses and the light wheels of the tarantasses deviates from the Kama and crosses the plain towards the Volga. It is a crime. The river is a companion, and all the more so because it is not monotonous and wearisome like a forest or a line of mountains. It comes and laves the road, recedes, disappears and reappears further on, capriciously, with an aspect that is always new, always diverse. The rustling of water amidst the reeds of a river becomes a friendly murmur, a pleasant music which accompanies and delights us. And running water has always an inexplicable fascination which will chain a man for whole hours on the parapet of a bridge with his head inclined towards the river, merely watching it flow. . . .

Now we remain alone. The forest has become thinner, the plain more deserted, the villages more rare and more dirty. And the road grows worse. Fortunately it does not rain, otherwise we should have been stuck in one of those atrocious ditches into which we fall every now and again. As a compensation, however, a terrible wind is blowing, a wind which reminds us of the Rocky Mountains and the night at Medicine Bow. But we are travelling slowly with infinite toil and trouble on a machine which rattles and creaks in all its joints, like an old wooden ship in a storm. But we get forward. By six o'clock we are at Melekeski and by eleven at Malmyshi.

August 20.—We stop at Kazan for lunch. We

arrived there at midday after a fatiguing journey which cost us a spring and a chain. And we did not see the Volga. The Volga does not pass Kazan; it is further on. But we have seen an electric tram. We had vainly but with a perfectly explicable anxiety sought for it at Perm, where it does not exist. We attach to this fugitive sign of civilisation an extraordinary amount of importance. We find it again here, at Kazan. It carries on a limited service between the town and the landing stage on the Volga, about four versts away. The cars are tiny and dirty; they travel with a tremendous noise of rattling ironmongery, and carry a tired old bell which utters the most terrifying sounds. But they are tram-cars, and that is enough. When to-day, after three and a half months, I see a sort of coffee mill rolling on wheels, and when I look up to the sky through an intricate network of wires, I experience an inexplicable kind of joy. I wanted to embrace the conductor when I got on board. But he was a Tartar!

The passengers were Tartars, and the signs in the shops along the streets were also Tartar. That is characteristic of Kazan. It is a large, beautiful city, with magnificent shops, superb and elegantly dressed ladies, great churches with silver and gold-plated domes shining in the sun, dominated by a dark, ferocious-looking Kremlin like a fortress and by a tall tower—the Spaskaya; but it is Tartar. Russia has put it to fire and sword, has imposed on it the hierarchical dominion of her cupolas and the cruel power of her governors: she has carried her torches and her swords through all the houses and the mosques, and tried to drown in the waters of the Volga whatever there was in this city sacred to Mahomet, but she has not been

able to destroy its nature. Kazan was born Tartar. The national sentiment has been born again from the ground, like a flower springing up from the blood and the ashes, as though it found in all the butchery and destruction the *humus* propitious to its resurrection. It has resisted with unheard-of obstinacy and tenacity all the violence which has been offered it by Ivan IV and his successors until to-day. It flourishes in spite of suppression and of violence. The Russians are ferocious, but inconsistent conquerors. They break what they cannot bend, but they do not persevere when they can neither bend nor break. So it is at Kazan. The bloody centuries which have seen the city razed and burned four times, and four times reconstructed, have served for one thing—namely to give it truce and peace. Since neither of the two contestants—the one the invader and the other attached to the earth by deeply struck roots—has had the strength to drive out the other, they have divided the city between them. The Russians have erected their magnificent churches; the Tartars have raised, one upon the other, the stones of their minarets which were beaten down by the Cossacks. They have made two distinct towns, which seem to menace each other. They do not fight with arms; they fight with bricks. The Muscovite churches, ostentatiously magnificent and shining, at the feet of which nestles the large modern town which the Russians have erected, have all the appearance of being ensigns of war rather than temples of peace: they are fortresses rather than churches. Their very magnificence has an air of challenge and defiance. The turreted, battlemented Kremlin and the dark severe-looking towers appear to be birds of prey ready to hurl

themselves forward with claws stretched and beaks open.

In front of all this rise the slender, graceful mosques with their minarets of marble, each surmounted by a crescent. Amidst the woods all around is a sea of little Tartar houses, built of mud and straw, swarming with people, prolific from the roof to the door. Their whole strength is in this tenacious obstinacy of the race to survive. ✓ It is this which has enabled the Tartars to withstand all the terrible blood-letting of the past. ✓

So Kazan lives in a constant state of warfare. But it is not open warfare, roared across the streets from the mouths of rifles, but a pacific war, a war of silent penetration in which each of the adversaries fights as best he can without making any noise. Every year Russia builds a new church and founds a new school; every year the Tartars raise the height of their minarets and hire ten new shops in the Russian quarter. For both sides the battle is harsh and interminable; both continue ceremoniously to give blow for blow with a mace covered with velvet. This does not show, however, that they cannot live one immediately beside the other for many years until some unforeseeable solution is reached. In these racial struggles, which are not decided by guns, but by the ledgers of the merchant and the lectures of the schoolmaster, the result is always uncertain. ✓ For everything depends upon the strength and the tenacity of the two races and on their destiny. Which destiny, as everybody knows, rests on the knees of Jove. ✓

We had our lunch in a delightful restaurant of the Russian town on a flower-covered verandah in a green arbour, and for the first time since we left Paris we ate



well without borsch, without steak, without rice. . . .  
So we pardoned Russia everything.

At two o'clock we were off again in the direction of Vassilisursk after crossing the Volga in a ferry-boat. It was an atrocious road, but it became worse as we proceeded towards Nizhni Novgorod. We had only one guide, the telegraph, a line stretched across a procession of poles. To-day, after a long interval, we see once more our most fickle friend, which has accompanied us for so large a portion of our journey across the world, following us from one land to another. It has gradually become such an essential element in the landscape that we feel its absence almost instinctively. We had not seen it since leaving Okansk, but to-day, running towards Vassilisursk, we find it again. Running is hardly the word to use, we were rather walking, because the road was not one upon which fast travelling was possible. We went slowly, almost at a walking pace, and thanked God that we were able to do so much. And we were decidedly grateful this evening when we arrived at a village after a ten hours' journey. To-day 106 versts!

August 21.—We have driven all day under a deluge, not a calm, persistent rain like that of Siberia, but violent and tempestuous, hurled against us by a furious wind which beat it pitilessly into our faces. Consequently it was a wretched journey in view of the terrible condition of the road, which seems to be more like a freshly ploughed field, and also on account of the condition of the machine which is absolutely worn out. In the evening we stopped for a moment at Vassilisursk and then continued towards Nizhni Novgorod.

August 22.—At three o'clock this morning we

arrived at Nizhni Novgorod. The road was absolutely infernal, having been entirely neglected for years and years. It is completely cut up by cart ruts ; it is wide or narrow according to the caprice of the trees which border it. We have travelled along a species of foot-path all the day. Nizhni Novgorod was asleep when we arrived, and the great streets, silent and deserted under the livid cascade of electric light, awoke suddenly to our clamorous passage. We passed like the wind. Two or three moujiks who were arriving in the town with baskets full of eggs were so astonished that they nearly dropped their loads to the ground. A little further on, in a great square, we were obliged to put the brake on our enthusiasm. In the first place, because we did not know the road. This is a thing which has only happened to us quite recently. It occurred at Ekaterinberg, and was very amusing. Until to-day we had never run the danger of mistaking our road. The Siberian villages and towns are always built along the two sides of the road ; they succeed the trees and the steppe ; that is all. But the road does not heed them and passes on quietly. It is different here in Europe. As we proceed the towns grow into large caravanserais dispersed in a labyrinth of streets, in which the poor country "track" loses itself and is submerged like a peasant coming to town. And naturally we lost ourselves also. Hence we were obliged to convince one of the guards in the street of our absolute innocuity so far as regards the health of Tsarism before we could induce him to embark with us and proceed to the lower part of the Novgorod in order to pass the bridge over the Volga and continue to Vladimir and Moscow.

In the second place, we had to rein in our enthusiasm because the bridge over the Volga was open, and is not closed until seven o'clock. This is a swing bridge which opens in two parts to give passage to the steamers. It remains open until seven o'clock, and in the meanwhile the land traffic is interrupted. When it closes the procession of vehicles of all sorts begins. In some moments this bridge resembles the bridge of Galata, so many races and so much merchandise stream across it. The great fair is on the other side, along the Oka, an affluent of the Volga which joins it close to Nizhni Novgorod. But the fair is empty and closed. It is waiting for the new year to waken it into life.

So we were compelled to wait at the mouth of the bridge from 3.30 until 7. It was a terrible task, getting out of Nizhni, on account of the infinite number of wagons, telegas, and tarantasses which encumbered the road. Naturally all the drivers were drunk, because no good Russian will mount his vehicle without taking a reasonable dose of alcohol, and the horses were excitable: hence there were disputes, shouts, protests, and delays. At nine o'clock, liberated at last from all these troubles, we were alone on the road for Moscow. It is a good road, but not excellent; well metalled in the centre but loose at the sides, full of deep holes and terrible lumps; wide and imposing at first, but gradually becoming narrower and mean under the pressure of the forest. And it is so much the worse because it appears to be good and inviting. Scarcely has the car begun to trust it and put on speed than the road reveals itself in its true character and the torment begins. At one part the road was barred a little beyond the village; it was under repair. Neither

of us perceived this, as we were accustomed to the Siberian villages, closed by a barrier beside which watched the oldest of the inhabitants who would open it at the sight of the first rouble. So we were continuing, when suddenly something dashed out on the road from the door of an izba, agitated its arms like an energumen, and shouted—“*Gaspada! gaspada!!*”

We came to a sudden stop; the long, lean being—it proved to be a man—approached us; he desired to say many things, and did, in fact, say them, in rapid Russian, looking intently into our faces to make us understand. Then, persuaded of the uselessness of his linguistic efforts, which were wasted against our supine ignorance, he decided to show us, by signs, that the road was broken and that we must take the pathway through the fields. He ingenuously believed that his mission was finished there, and was about to go off, very much irritated because he had received no gratification from our side, when he was suddenly snatched up by his arms and hoisted on to the step. He struggled for a few moments but then resigned himself, indeed, when the machine moved back a few paces in order to get on to the path, he became quite happy and, full of pride, shouted to a number of people who had come up—“*Do svidania, do svidania*” (au revoir).

The path was, of course, impossible; it was traced by the wheels of the telegas across a field of Indian corn and was naturally too narrow for our wheels, which pitilessly broke down the grain.

A little further on we resumed our march along the *chaussée*. The weather was bad but not remarkably so, with alternations of rain and sun succeeding each other rapidly. But we skidded tremendously. It was

not the honest kind of skid to which we had grown accustomed in Siberia, but an insidious trap which seized us when we least expected it. In Siberia we felt the oscillation of the machine and travelled always with precaution, with all our senses ready for the least slip. Here it is not so. The car is firm and secure in the midst of the road; it does not waver or jerk. The speed increases gradually until the air begins to whistle round us. For some ten minutes we drive with our faces to the wind, taking advantage of the improved stretch in the road. Trees and telegraph poles begin to flee past us quickly. There is a descent, a rise, another descent, a sensation of continual falling, and then a shock. . . .

Haaga and I find ourselves side by side stretched on the grass. The car is near us on its wheels, but turned in the contrary direction. The front axle and the bar joining the two wheels to the steering-post were bent. Haaga, jumping to his feet, looks at the machine philosophically.

“And now?” I ask.

“We must repair it.”

“Repair it, but how? Here?”

“No, not here—at the nearest village.”

“Do you believe there is a village in this neighbourhood where the axle can be straightened?”

“I do not only believe it, I am certain.”

“You have a splendid faith in Russian civilisation; but I permit myself a little doubt.”

“Which is . . .?”

“Regarding the means by which you will get to this hypothetical village.”

“Oh, that is very easy. I shall go in a telega. Look there, in the bottom of the meadow there is an

izba ; I shall go and ask for a telega, or at least for a horse, and shall carry the axle to the village, repair it there, then return . . .”

“To-morrow morning,” I concluded. “Very good ; go and come back. As for me, I shall stretch myself under the car to shelter myself from the rain, and shall sleep.”

We removed the two front wheels, the attachments of the springs, the bar and the steering-post ; we placed jacks under the fore part of the car, and then Haaga, taking the load on his shoulders, went off. I wrapped myself in a fur, put a camera under my head, and stretched myself beneath the Züst and went to sleep. I dreamed of Japan ; of a tea-house in Yokohama, and of a little damsel with almond eyes, who touched me on the shoulder as she brought me some tea. . . .

It was Haaga who touched me ; he had returned from the village with the repairs completed. He took only two hours to go there, to straighten the axle and return. The car was soon ready, and we were again speeding towards Moscow, through the forest and little villages under the rain and the wind. But despite the wind which drove into our faces, tiny pieces of gravel from the road, and the rain which penetrated our waterproofs and wetted us to the skin, we hurried onwards, urged by the frenzied desire of arriving. It was the same frenzy which had always seized us towards the end of one of the great stages of our journey, which had nailed us to our seats for hours and hours, just before San Francisco, before Tsuruga, Kharbin, and Omsk. Moscow is the end for us to-day, the entrance once more into normal existence. We are convinced that on the banks of the Moskva our

journey and all our efforts and fatigues will be finished, and that there will begin a promenade amongst banquets and fireworks and flowers and smiles. So we hurry on through the storm as though the whole of insidious Siberia, unwilling to let us out of its clutches, were at our heels.

Night falls, and we stop to light up; the beams from our acetylene lamp shine in the puddles in the road and illumine the lines of trees. A deserted village, a bridge, another . . . halt!

We have scarcely time to stop, five yards from the precipice. I descend to examine, furious with the obstacle. From the seat Haaga asks—

“What is it? Make haste.”

“It is a bridge—broken.”

“We can pass?”

“On the bridge—no.”

I look round hurriedly and discover a little path through the forest, which is approached by a slight descent from the road, and which rises to the road again a little beyond the obstacle. It has evidently been made by passing telegas, but it is so muddy and saturated that it has been necessary to throw down branches of trees before even these vehicles could pass. I sank into it almost up to my knees.

“There is a passage, but it is muddy; a bed has been made of branches of trees to render it more solid.”

“Will it bear?”

“I don't think so, but there is no other way. We must either make the attempt or stop here.”

We decide to make the attempt, but it will be necessary to put on full speed. I place myself on one side, and distinctly hear the characteristic noise of the

clutch engaging. Haaga is off and enters the path, bumping terribly and inclining on one side. He gets through the bog, tearing the branches under his wheels, and comes roaring to the ascent. Then he stops half-way up, held by the insidious mud. Another turn of the wheels and he would have been on the road. The engine makes every effort, but the enemy will not give way. I come from the corner in which I was waiting, stumbling in the mud.

“What is it?” I ask Haaga.

“She is fixed.”

“And now?”

“We must try to liberate her. Here are some beams which have been left by the men who built the bridge; let us make a lever, raise the car, and then we can make a bridge of the beams.”

We set to work immediately. We raised one wheel with the lever and put a stone under it, but while we were going to the other to repeat the operation the machine slipped anew into the mud and everything had to be begun over again.

We continued our efforts for an hour and a half, and then, utterly worn out, resigned ourselves to the inevitable. Adieu, Moscow!

Haaga, who has been driving from Vassilisursk without a moment's rest—that is to say, for forty-eight hours—goes to sleep; I remain on guard. We have not the least idea of the time because our watches have stopped. Whilst Haaga stretches himself on the big petrol tank and sleeps with his head wrapped in a sack, I find a flat stone, on which I sit and begin to think. Gradually, however, I am overcome by fatigue and fall asleep. . . .

. . . . .



August 23.—A hand placed lightly on my shoulder wakes me. I jump up quickly and perceive a bearded moujik, who smiles. It is daylight, a day grey and dark. But the rain has ceased. Haaga is still asleep with his head wrapped in the sack. I am soaked from head to foot.

“*Drasti, gaspada,*” says the moujik.

“*Drasti . . . Aftomobil . . . ballottnaia*” (mud), I reply, summoning to my aid all my linguistic science. Then having exhausted my vocabulary I begin to gesticulate in order to explain that we are in need of men and horses to raise the car and get it out of the mud. He must have understood, because he went off at a run. He soon returned at the head of some twenty peasants, all dressed in their best, with shining boots and well-combed beards. They calmly yoked themselves to a rope which they bound to the fore part of the chassis, while Haaga started the motor. Then they hauled. The car came out of the morass easily, like a hand out of a glove, without the slightest shock, and was on the good road almost before we were aware of it. The moujiks smiled with satisfaction on seeing its liberation. I wanted to give them some roubles which they might conscientiously change into vodka: they refused disdainfully. It was Sunday, and a day of rest, and in Russia a peasant may not labour for gain: they may assist a neighbour, even at the cost of spoiling their shining boots.

At eight o'clock we entered Vladimir, and stopped for an hour to eat and have a bath. We passed Pokroff at two in the morning. At six the horizon opened suddenly and Moscow appeared—a wave of white houses, surmounted by the gilded domes of the churches and the dark mass of the Kremlin.

### III

#### THE TRAGIC FRONTIER

AUGUST 26.—We spent three days at Moscow, three days of repose and calm after our last strenuous experience on the road from Kazan. They were days of banquets, festivities, and receptions on the part of the Automobile Club, private gentlemen, and journalists, and they will never be forgotten on account of the cordial good-fellowship with which we were treated. It almost seemed as though we were prodigal children returned after long years of absence to the paternal home. Hence it was with much regret that we dragged ourselves away both from the town and from our newly found friends.

At three o'clock we started in the direction of St. Petersburg. We could have gone via Warsaw, and thus saved ourselves many miles and much annoyance. But since the others took the St. Petersburg route, we will follow the same. It was raining when we left, but only slightly. Several automobilists accompanied us out of Moscow and travelled with us for about thirty versts. The road was very good, almost excellent, but full of worrying little bridges which perpetually compelled us to slow down. Cut through cultivated fields for over 700 versts, the road is one single straight line as far as St. Petersburg.

But though the road was good, the car was very bad.

The chains are worn out, and at every hundred yards they jump from the wheels. We have repaired them fourteen times in five and a half hours this evening. Halt in a quiet little town with an hotel, 160 versts from Moscow.

August 27.—We made very bad progress to-day owing to the terrible state of the car. The chains have become a perfect torture, an incubus which causes us to travel with our eyes always fixed on them, thus depriving us of all the pleasure of the landscape, which is beautiful here. Gradually on the route the primitive izba has become a cottage, a chalet, a villa; even the "zimskaya" has disappeared and been substituted by fine hotels, where the beds are soft and the cutlets well cooked. It is these which, for the moment, form in our opinion the greatest joy in the world.

At eight o'clock in the evening we are 460 versts from Moscow and twenty-five from Novgorod, the old Novgorod, the ancient Slav fortress, which has been killed by time, and which now, desolate and abandoned, vegetates around its Kremlin. We proceed towards Novgorod, intending to sleep there. But the automobilist proposes and the road disposes. We are, in fact, some three versts away from the town when we are faced by an interruption in the road. The surface is being repaired, and a muddy path which fills us with fear has been traced alongside the road. Our experience of these Russian paths has been too recent and too terrible for us to have any desire to attempt them again. Let us try to get over the portion of the road on which the flints have been already spread, waiting for the steam-roller. We make the attempt.

The car bounds quickly over the rough surface for

a few yards, then stops. The road seems to be built on a species of pond, and beneath the weight of the car the flints sink into the mud, and the back wheels with them. We met the mishap with relative philosophy; we are so accustomed to this experience and these atrocious roads that they cause us neither wonder nor grief. At the worst we feel a slight sense of regret for the sleep and the cutlets which we had promised ourselves, but of which our enemy has now deprived us. We made not the slightest effort to liberate the machine; we both stretched ourselves on the big tank, covered ourselves with furs, and went to sleep. At ten o'clock a moujik passing in a telega, seeing the unaccustomed band of light from our lamps, stopped and woke us. After a few words we decided that Haaga should go with the telega to Novgorod and get assistance. I remained sleeping on the car, but fortunately it was not raining. . . .

At three o'clock in the morning I was aroused by voices. Our rescuers had arrived. Some thirty or forty moujiks from Novgorod in various vehicles, with ropes and beams and lanterns—and breakfast. They make a most infernal noise and pay not the least attention to our directions. They wish to do everything in their own way, and they begin to work with loud shouts and exclamations, whilst Haaga and I, without helping them in the least, devour the cold meat and bread. After about half an hour the car is liberated. But it is precisely at this point that the most difficult part of the job begins. The car is drawn backwards off the loose stones, but it has now to be got on to the path. This, however, is accomplished to the accompaniment of shouts of encouragement from the

tribe of moujiks. The car immediately begins to sink in the mud, totters, then recovers itself, but the moujiks push it forward, and at last the difficult place is overcome. Then forward, urged by the yelling mob, up and down hill, through the darkness which is streaked with yellow by the flames of lanterns. On the hills the moujiks push all together; on the descents they run behind, stumbling about in the mud. Soon the car is on the road again, some moujiks manage to climb on to the hinder part of the machine before Haaga puts on speed; the others mount their vehicles, and the procession begins. It is not so much a procession as a most fantastic saraband led, at a great speed, by the automobile. Those who are on the car and who maintain themselves there by performing gymnastic miracles shout insults and provocations to the others on the telegas, and the latter reply with vituperations and cracking their whips. Soon we reach a line of electric lamps, and a wide avenue opens before us. It is Novgorod; and the hotel.

August 28.—We started at midday in the rain. It was mud, rain, and broken chains all the way. Thirty-one repairs in fourteen hours! So it was only at two o'clock in the morning that we arrived at St. Petersburg amidst a line of carts carrying milk and eggs to the great city. Our faces were encrusted with mud, our clothes were wet, and we were terribly hungry.

At the Hotel d'Angleterre the porter received us with a glance full of suspicion.

August 29.—We spent the whole day effecting repairs in the garage of the hotel under the eyes of two English tourists, who were evidently interested by the Japanese inscription, "New York—Paris," painted

on our engine cover at Yokohama. They evidently know something of us, while the rest of humanity here ignores us altogether. Even the Automobile Club does not give the least sign of life. At two o'clock in the afternoon we started, after having changed the chains and made a minute inspection of the whole of the car. We replenished our stock of petrol and oil at the garage of the Automobile Club, and then took the road to Gatchina, where the Tsar is living.

The road is good and the car goes well. We pass Gatchina at midnight. It is a series of enormous barracks in the midst of which, quite invisible, is the Imperial Villa. Under a deluge of rain we enter Pleskoff, 360 versts from St. Petersburg.

August 29.—We stopped for two hours at Pleskoff for breakfast in a pompous hostelry called the "Gostinitza to Anglia," and then resumed our journey towards Riga, about three hundred versts further on. The road was excellent, and we travelled as we had never done since the starting flag was lowered at New York. In my opinion we were getting along too fast. Rain had been falling all the morning, and the road, although excellent, was soaked and slippery. Soon we came to a number of short turns in the road, which we could not negotiate without slowing down. The country was perfectly deserted for miles and miles; there was not a village, nor a house, but now and again we came across a carriage of a German rather than of a Russian type. At two o'clock we stopped for a moment to transfer the petrol from the large to the small tank. At four o'clock across the fir trees there appeared the first sand dunes. Beyond this sand must certainly be the other sea for which we are seeking, and to see which we have crossed

the whole of Asia and half Europe. But we do not see it. We see Riga first—a proud city, deplorably German, deserted and drowned in rain. At the hotel, however, there were some gentlemen and ladies waiting for us with flowers and cheers. Popular enthusiasm, for fear of getting wet, had sought shelter under the portico of the Hôtel de Rome.

August 30.—At midday we left for the frontier; a great procession of motor-cars, preceded by a large yellowish omnibus, accompanied us outside the town. They put us on the right road and returned. The road is a marvellous one, well built and running straight across the magnificent plains of Livonia. It was encumbered by a regular crowd of carts, carriages, buggies, and mail coaches, all loaded with girls dressed in white and men and women in festive attire. We pass through the midst of them, spreading fear and terror everywhere. The horses take fright, the girls scream, and the men curse us. One or two carts are overturned into the ditches, but no great damage is done to the occupants. There is no serious incident, however, until we get to Mittau. It is about four o'clock. We stop there, but only for an instant. The road is still good, but less crowded, and the landscape is delightful. . . .

Two children are playing on the edge of the road, a boy and a girl, both tiny and light-haired. A cart comes bumping along. The horses, maddened by the noise of our machine, give a great jerk to the cart and take to flight; the little boy rushes from the side of the road and falls before the horses. . . .

“Stop, Haaga, stop!”

The wheels of the cart bump more violently over a little heap of rags, and the vehicle disappears in the

dust. On the ground, huddled on its left side with the fair head covered in sand and blood, the little body remains, dead. The face is turned towards the earth and the little hands, stretched out as though in self-protection, have fallen to its side. We pick up the little corpse, wrap it in a covering, and place it as gently as possible, as though unwilling to disturb its sleep, in the hinder part of the machine on a heap of furs, and then cover it in order to hide it from our eyes. We take the little sister on the car, seat her between us, and as soon as the first moment of terror has passed, she begins to chatter joyfully.

We proceed very slowly, avoiding all the stones and all the ruts. The little girl beside us continues to chatter in the dialect which is neither Russian, nor Livonian, nor German, but a mixture of all three, which it is absolutely impossible to comprehend. But she does not mind if we do not reply to her. And she does not know that the little bundle behind is her brother. . . .

At midnight we stop at Tauroggen, the Russian frontier village. We pull up at the gendarme barracks. A sleepy guard, summoned from his dreams by the violent reports of our exhaust—which he seems to have taken for rifle-shots—comes to see what the trouble is.

“Who are you?” he asks in German.

“Motorists.”

“And what do you want?”

“To make a serious report; will you call your chief?”

“The Pristaff?”

“Whomever you please, so long as he is an authority of some sort.”



“He is asleep at this hour.”

“Then wake him up.”

“But who are you that he should be disturbed?”

“I have told you, motorists.”

“Wait a minute.”

He goes off, closing the door behind him, and in a few moments returns, accompanied by an officer, who speaks in French.

“You wish to make a declaration?”

“Yes. Along the road a cart, the horses of which were terrified by the noise of our motor, knocked down and killed a boy. We have brought him here to have him identified. See!”

And I pointed with my finger behind, not daring to look. The Pristaff's face grew clouded in a moment.

“I know about this affair already. It has been reported to me by telegram from Mittau, on the denunciation of a driver, that one of the motors in the New York to Paris race has killed a baby on the high road, so, much to my regret, while waiting for the inquiry, I shall be compelled to keep you here.”

It is a terrible blow. We are strangers here, ignorant of the language and quite friendless in a Russian village; and the person who accuses us is a man of the country, a master of the language and of the customs; so with what arms shall we defend ourselves? How can we demonstrate our innocence? Shall we remain here for months and months, buried in a dark prison? All the terrible tales of exile, imprisonment, and deportation which have filled the newspapers, return to our minds; we remember the unspeakable horrors, unheard-of cruelties of Russian prisons. The good-nature of the Pristaff does not reassure us at all; we shall certainly

be deported, probably to Siberia, which would be the worst fate of all. So we tried to add:—

“But we are innocent; we picked up the body and brought it here. . . .”

“I quite believe what you say, but unfortunately, I must do my duty. Will you kindly enter the barracks, gentlemen?”

The door closes behind us; when will it open again? It is all over now, and there is no escape. We have fought against all the difficulties and triumphed over everything; over the mud, over the snow, over precipices, mountains, deserts, fire, flood, and sickness. But how shall we find strength to fight against and overcome the Russian police. It is all over now!

## IV

### CRUEL GERMANY

SEPTEMBER 4.—On the contrary, it is not all over. Once more we have conquered and escaped from the snares set for us by the cruel destiny which pursues us. We spent three days in prison, it is true, after being transferred under a guard of gendarmes in a tarantass to Mittau, and from Mittau to Ianiski. Our three days of confinement were passed in a great room of the prison, redolent with humanity and smoke, in company with fourteen delinquents who spoke all the languages of the world—except our own, naturally. On the first day, for a couple of hours, we were the object of general curiosity, particularly because we had obtained permission to wear our own clothes. We were deluged with questions by the other prisoners, who, confronted by our tonguelessness, soon returned to their various occupations. For three days we lived in a corner of that room seated on a hard bench, eating a few spoonfuls of the daily bean soup, scarcely daring to sip a drop of the infected water from a jug, and not speaking a word. Yesterday the same gendarmes took us back to Tauroggen, and the Pristaff, with the utmost courtesy, returned to us our car, which had been sequestered, and our liberty. We could hardly believe our eyes and ears. The Pristaff even took us to the

little club of the village, and was most profuse in his excuses for the annoyance that we had been caused.

Yesterday afternoon we started for the German frontier, passing it at four o'clock. At six o'clock we were at Tilsit, at midnight we reached Königsberg, and at six o'clock this morning we stopped at a little wooden inn at Braunsberg to have some coffee. We continued our journey through Elbing to Marienberg, Dirschau, Stargaard, and Custrim, fifty miles from Berlin. A magnificent day—430 miles.

September 5.—We slept until ten o'clock this morning. By old habit we both awoke at six, but as we were no longer oppressed by the incubus of an unknown road ahead, we went to sleep again with immense satisfaction. We were aroused by the clatter of artillery wagons of a regiment returning from the manoeuvres, and were soon *en route* for Berlin. A marvellous road and an enchanting landscape. At Munchenberg, some twelve miles from Berlin, we were stopped. The Kaiserlicher Automobil Club had sent half a dozen beflagged cars to meet us, and we were begged to pass a night at Munchenberg, so that we could enter Berlin on Sunday. There was also a Züst car bringing the manager and representatives of the Berlin branch of the firm. It is a racing car, agile and swift, shining with brass and painted a pale blue, which gives it the appearance of a bonbonnière. Our poor car, all barked and bruised, encrusted with the dust of all the roads of the world, looks a miserable thing beside it—a sort of poor relation.

September 6.—Departure at eight o'clock. We are piloted by the racing Züst, and followed by the cars which had come to meet us at Munchenberg. When

all are in line we pass through the wide Berlinerstrasse. The good Germans regard us in a certain sense as the moral victors in the race, through which we have travelled more loyally than all the rest, perspiring for mile after mile, and measuring the ground inch by inch. All that portion of Berlin which has good legs and a love of the open air is distributed along the road on bicycles and afoot, or in motor-cars. They have loaded their machines and filled their hands with flowers, tied tricolour ribbons on their arms, and stuck flags everywhere. They come singly, in groups, and in processions; and salute us as we pass with a cheery "*Hoch! Hoch!*" All the doors, all the windows of the villas hidden amidst the trees, are open, and from the gardens ladies dressed in white cry, "*Evviva!*"

Our car rolls calmly along through all this enthusiasm. So many people have shouted to it "*Evviva!*" in so many languages that it no longer experiences any pride; it travels towards Berlin as it did towards a Siberian "*zims kaya,*" or the end of any day's journey.

Gradually the fields disappear, gardens become more frequent, villas join up and form a continuous line, the roads become paved. . . . Berlin! Berlin!

Once more begins the strange medley of sounds which recalls the tumultuous, unforgettable departure from Paris.

"*Hoch! Hoch! Evviva Roma! Evviva l'Italia!*"

It was an augury and salutation then, it is a salutation and applause to-day.

The Königstrasse, the Leipzigerstrasse, and Unter den Linden are all black with people, the pavement is drowned by a wave of humanity, the tram-cars are perfect forests of waving umbrellas, sticks, and hand-

kerchiefs. Outside the offices of the Züst—halt! We have hardly stopped before we are hauled from our seats and carried off. I remember some cameras being pointed at us, some gendarmes in spiked helmets struggling against the throng, a wave of shouting . . . nothing more.

September 7.—After a perfect fury of festivities we retired to bed very late, and consequently were unable to make an early start this morning. It was in fact afternoon when we left, our Züst having been decked with flowers by the fair hands of some ladies. But yesterday's crowd was not in the streets to-day. It is a day for work, not for enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, like all useless and superfluous things, is reserved by the good Berliners for Sunday.

At midnight we reached Naumberg.

September 8.—Only a few vegetable sellers and scavengers were in the deserted streets when we left Naumberg at dawn. Beyond Halle we stopped for luncheon in a little inn at the entrance to a village, where we had burst a tyre. We really ate too much sausage, and drank too much Rhine wine at the Thuringer-Hof! Then, the tyre being repaired, we started along the magnificent road, through villages drowsy in the September sun. Haaga and I are seated in front; Huber, the engineer of the Züst Company, who has done a great part of the journey with us behind, on the big petrol tank. He is asleep, and we, too, are nodding slightly, after the Rhine wine. Suddenly there is a violent jerk to the left, another to the right, trees are grazed, . . . "The brakes, Haaga, stop!" . . . a twist . . . the edges of the road approach and recede . . . shrill cries. . . . It is all over, all over!

I recovered my senses in a strange bed, with my hands and head bound up. Haaga was groaning beside me. I was told that a passing car had picked us all up; we were unconscious, bruised, and covered with blood. I was on the ground with my face in the grass; Haaga was fixed between the seat and the steering-wheel. Huber lay without breathing. And the car was stuck in an embankment with a wheel smashed, the axle bent, the springs broken, and the stays of the engine bent. It was carried to the Ruppe automobile factory on a cart, like a corpse.

And this place is Apolda. Huber is in hospital. This evening he was delirious, calling his mother.

September 13.—The car is saved; and Huber also. He came out of hospital yesterday. The car, patched up as far as possible, will leave the Ruppe factory to-day. Once more it is on its four wheels, strong and willing as ever. And we also, covered with bruises, stunned, wrapped in bandages, are strong and willing, perhaps more so than ever. This last blow of destiny has only increased our determination to finish the course. An easy journey along this magnificent road would have been too mean an ending to our race. We shall have to struggle against fate until the last day.

September 14.—Departure at two o'clock in the afternoon. A grand farewell luncheon, champagne, toasts, signatures to photographs, and then, away! Paris is within five hundred miles.

Erfurt, Weimar, Eisenach are passed rapidly. Haaga drives with enthusiasm. By the time we reach Gotha night has fallen. A tyre bursts, a chain jumps, the carburettor works badly—all is set right and we continue the breathless journey.

September 15.—Some slight repairs detained us at Frankfort, but by ten o'clock we were again on the road. Nowhere in the world are Frankfort sausages worse than they are at Frankfort! Mainz is passed. We enter Saarbrucken when the lamps are already lit. A terrible anxiety to reach the end urges us forward. We approach the dark walls of a fortress. It is Metz! We enter a gate and drive along an avenue between the outer and inner bastions, looking for the town. A Prussian officer passes and we ask.

“ Metz ? ”

“ *Par ici, Messieurs !* ”

He spoke in French! Here is France! Further along the houses begin. On the first shop that appears is the sign “ Pascal, Cordonnier.” I nearly fainted with joy.



## V

### PARIS AT LAST!

SEPTEMBER 16.—On, on, towards Paris! The last stage to-day! A feeling of happiness quickened our pulses as we started at daybreak, leaving Metz by the *Porte des Français* and proceeding to the frontier. . . .

A sleepy little village at the top of a hill; a woman going to a well with a pail hung at each end of a long pole; a great stone eagle—it is the frontier, the German side—Halt!

The woman stops and gazes curiously at us.

“*Vous voulez passer?*” she asks.

“*Oui; où est-il, le douanier?*”

“*Le fonctionnaire dort à cette heure. On peut le réveiller, si vous voulez. . . . Je vais frapper à sa fenêtre.*”

She knocked, and out came a tall Lorrainer cursing and grumbling in French. Apparently much to his surprise, our documents were in order and he was unable to keep us back in revenge for his broken sleep.

A run downhill, and we reach the French frontier village. There are two most polite French soldiers and a Frenchwoman. In front of us stretches the great plain of France which we have desired for eight months. I dismount, and, faithful to the promise made at Perm, approach the woman.

“*Vous êtes française, Madame?*”

*“Oui, monsieur, à votre service.”*

*“Eh bien, madame, permettez-moi de vous embrasser. Je vous porte ce baiser du fond de la Russie, de la part d'une femme française qui vit là-bas dans le tourment continu de ne pas voir son pays. Elle m'a chargé d'embrasser la première femme française que je verrai sur le sol français et de lui dire que c'était de sa part. La première femme c'est vous. Permettez donc que je vous embrasse pour l'amour de cette pauvre exilée et un peu encore pour l'amour de moi qui ai souffert jusqu'à présent de la même épouvantable maladie. Voulez-vous ?”*

*“Mais très volontiers, Monsieur.”*

And we kissed each other effusively. On her lips I found France again, and on mine she must have found all the love and the desire that I had for France. The douanier smiled.

On again towards Paris! At eleven o'clock appears Verdun, where we stop an instant for lunch while a tyre is being repaired. By two o'clock we are at Châlons-sur-Marne. At three we halt at Bergères-les-Vertus to take in petrol, and at four we sight the grand old walls of Meaux. We are tired in mind rather than in body, and we prefer to wait. Paris at midday appeals more strongly to us, and better corresponds to our mood. . . .

In the Hotel Sirène, which reminds me of the one at Mantes, where we shook off the first dust of our departure, I call to mind all the trials and perils and battles of the last eight months. As I think my lips curl in ironical incredulity. Have we done all this? Have we brought this gigantic enterprise to a close—we, two inexperienced men, almost boys? In America

when the Züst came up to the starting-line the people smiled. They called it "the children's car," and asked us if we thought we should find oranges on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains. That ironical diffidence, I remember, caused me a certain amount of pain. I began to doubt, and was silent. Then we started. We had many vicissitudes. Joy and sorrow alternated. Our task was a rough one, but we persevered. America froze us; Asia flagellated us with its rain; Europe came to us with arms loaded with catastrophes. To-day Paris appears, smiling in a brilliant sunset. Is it finished? Has the "Children's Car" arrived? I can hardly persuade myself that it has.

September 17.—We started at ten o'clock, having announced our arrival in Paris for midday, and we wanted to be punctual. During the morning there was a continual pilgrimage of all sorts and conditions of men—and women—in the courtyard of the hotel. They looked around in search of the "heroes," and having seen us, shrugged the shoulders and passed on, muttering: "C'est tout ça, les New York—Paris?" The car, reposing in the garage, awaiting its final effort, had, perhaps, rather more honour. The good citizens of Meaux crowded round it, touched it, stopped to read the words painted on it, "New York—Paris," then walked away without betraying the least sign of interest or enthusiasm. When at last we started the streets were full. It was market-day at Meaux.

We pass through the crowd at a walking pace, arousing protests, but not attracting a single glance. Meaux disappears at the first turn in the road, and we increase our speed. We stop at Joinville; it is eleven

o'clock, and we do not wish to arrive too soon. Half an hour later we are off again through the wonderful Bois de Vincennes. At a quarter to twelve we are at the Vincennes barrier, and Paris, our dream, spreads before us. The douanier smilingly signs to us to pass on. Some motor-cars offer to guide us; we do not heed them. We are living elsewhere, far from here . . . Boulevard de Vincennes, Place de la Bastille, Place de la République, Boulevard Voltaire, Boulevard Poissonnière, the *Matin* . . . speeches, champagne, toasts, congratulations, faces known eight months ago, the same sensations as then. . . .

It is the same, and we are the same as then, just as though the parenthesis had never been opened, as though the adventure were beginning to-day . . . no joy, no happiness, no remembrance. . . . And to think that we have traversed the world yard by yard to come here to gather happiness, that we have made this the ardent dream of all our nights, the goal of all our efforts! . . . But it is the destiny of man that all beautiful things wither in his grasp.✓

THE END.

6

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